

Answer Key

Lesson Two: **Slavery and the Struggle for Abolition from the Colonial Period to the Civil War**

Background Reading

1. Petitions against slavery were discussed among religious groups and sent to state legislatures. Massachusetts immediately emancipated slaves, other northern states passed gradual emancipation laws, and individuals privately manumitted enslaved people.
2. The Framers, chief among them James Madison, thought that by leaving out these terms the Constitution implicitly denied the legitimacy of a claim of property in another human being and slavery would be abolished in time.
3.
 - a. The cotton gin made cotton more a profitable crop and slavery expanded as cotton plantations spread throughout the lower South.
 - b. The Mexican-American war brought large new western territories under U.S. control and renewed the contention in Congress over the status of slavery in federal territories.
 - c. The decision in the Dred Scott v. Sandford case was a blow to abolitionists and further escalated sectional tensions over slavery prior to the Civil War.
 - d. Lincoln opposed the spread of slavery and his election as president caused 7 slaveholding states to secede from the Union.
4. African Americans joined the abolitionist movement in a variety of ways. Some wrote about their experiences under slavery, some helped others escape to freedom, and others worked to oppose laws that would limit their civil and political rights.

Primary Sources

Enactment of Hereditary Slavery Law, Virginia, 1662

1. A child was categorized as free or enslaved based on the status of his or her mother. This decision would dramatically increase the number of enslaved people in the colonies because the status of slave was now hereditary.
2. The existence of fewer indentured servants would create a labor shortage. Increasing the number of enslaved individuals would compensate for this shortage.

Germantown Friends Protest Against Slavery, 1688

1. Slavery was at odds with the Quakers' belief that all men and women are equal.
2. The author states that "we shall do to all men like as will be done ourselves" (the "Golden Rule"), and also that owning slaves or participating in the slave trade is the same as robbery and stealing, two things that are also morally wrong.
3. Students should justify their opinions in answering this question.

An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves, South Carolina, 1740

1. The South Carolina law specifies that mixed-race children were not exempted from following "the condition of the mother." It also states that enslaved people were considered the property (chattel) of their owners.

John Woolman, "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," 1754

1. Woolman is asking his reader a rhetorical question to imagine the roles reversed, and that the reader is enslaved.
2. Woolman asks his reader to consider reversing roles with an enslaved person. He also refers to the natural rights of freedom and liberty, which the 1688 petition does not do, focusing on a more moral and religious argument. Woolman argues that a slave never forfeits their liberty; therefore, their natural right to freedom is being violated.

Thomas Paine, "African Slavery in America," 1775

1. Paine is referring to the British government violating the colonists' natural rights.
2. Paine states that the colonists' participation in slavery and the slave trade is "a vice" that has "brought so much guilt on the land" and questions why it is not addressed while the colonists are criticizing other tyrannical actions.
3. Paine appeals to both justice and humanity in pointing out the evils of slavery.

Belinda Sutton, Petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1783

1. Sutton was 12 when she was captured. She uses detailed imagery to illustrate the tragedy and terror of this experience.
2. By law, Sutton was the property of her owner; however, she wrote that she was a “free moral agent” and therefore accountable for her own actions. Despite this innate freedom, her time was not her own because she was the property of another in the eyes of the law.
3. Sutton appealed to the legislators’ sense of virtue and of justice—of rewarding her honest work with pay rather than letting someone else enjoy the fruits of her labor.
4. Even though Sutton was awarded a pension, repeated action was required to ensure that she actually got what was promised.

Correspondence between Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson, August, 1791 and Thomas Jefferson’s response to Benjamin Banneker, 30 August, 1791

1. Banneker compares the status of being enslaved with the treatment of colonists by the tyrannical British before the American Revolution. He is pointing out hypocrisy.
2. Banneker uses Jefferson's own words to build his argument that it is hypocritical to fight being enslaved at the hands of the British but to allow slavery to continue in the United States. He points out that slavery is at odds with the language of the Declaration.
3. Jefferson's response is polite but brief. It is unclear whether the letter and almanac have changed his opinions.
4. Banneker is clearly educated and eloquent in his letter. His writing is itself a challenge to the prevailing notion that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites.
5. This conversation shows that during the Founding era, individuals were arguing against the existence of slavery because it was at odds with Founding principles put forth in the Declaration of Independence. This further shows that racial prejudices, entwined with the existence of slavery, were prevalent in the Founding era. Individuals like Banneker and his Quaker allies spoke out against these prejudices as well.

Ohio State Constitution, 1803 and Black Code, 1804

1. The first document bans slavery, whereas the second places various restrictions on the lives of free African Americans.
2. Free African Americans were meant to carry a certificate from the courts to verify their freedom. Acquiring this certificate required money, time, and probably some form of education to interact with the court. If the certificate could not be produced, per Section 3, free African Americans could not be hired or their employers would be fined.

U.S. Congress: An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves, 1807

1. The U.S. Constitution never used the term “slave” or “slavery,” yet this act explicitly does. The Framers of the U.S. Constitution did not want to legitimize slavery by explicitly referencing the term in the Constitution. However, Congress did so in ordinary laws.
2. Possible answer: Yes, it was a victory for Congress to stop slave imports as a way to stop adding to the slave population in the United States. It became a moot point, however, when slave populations naturally increased and reached more than 4 million by the time of the Civil War.

James Forten, from Letter I: Letters from a Man of Color, on a Late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania, 1813

1. Forten paraphrases the Declaration of Independence and refers to the Constitution as “that glorious fabric of collected wisdom” in that it established that all men are equal.
2. The Pennsylvania legislature was debating a bill to limit the rights of African Americans, and individuals like Forten spoke publicly against it. In this example, individuals like Forten were successful in influencing the legislators.

U.S. Congress: An Act to Authorize the People of the Missouri Territory to Form a Constitution and State Government (Missouri Compromise), 1820

1. The Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery's expansion north of the 36°30' parallel except for Missouri in the Louisiana Territory.
2. Possible answers could include: decreased tension over the spread of slavery in the Louisiana Territory, intensified debate between supporters of slavery and its opponents, and the need for additional legislation when new territory outside the Louisiana Territory was acquired (as it was from Mexico).
3. The Northwest and Southwest Ordinances established a geographic boundary (the Ohio River) for the expansion of slavery in future states. The Missouri Compromise sets a new boundary, so it is a continuity of the policy of trying to contain slavery's expansion.

David Walker, Appeal, in Four Articles, 1829

1. From his title, Walker is expressly addressing all black people in the United States.
2. Walker asks his white readers to free themselves of fear and prejudice, to enlighten or educate themselves, and to treat black men as equals.
3. Walker worked with a community of activists in Boston, Massachusetts, who strove to end slavery. He was surrounded by other free blacks and contributed to a newspaper for the community. From this, historians can estimate that he was a member of a network of free African Americans that supported each other and worked for abolition.

Maria Stewart Advocates Education for African American Women, 1832

1. Both Walker and Stewart address African Americans directly and call for them to act for their own betterment (secure their own freedom, seek their own education).
2. African Americans must educate their own, and Stewart is specifically addressing education for girls. She is critical of those who "hang their heads" and do not act.
3. Stewart, an African American, addressed an audience of men in a public lecture more than 10 years before the Seneca Falls Convention. She also advocated for female education.

William Lloyd Garrison, American Anti-Slavery Society Declaration of Sentiments, 1833

1. Garrison quotes the Declaration of Independence and refers to it as the “corner-stone” of the “Temple of Freedom.” He compares the wrongs of slavery to the wrongs experienced by the colonists, though he states that slavery is much worse.
2. Garrison’s language is passionate and dramatic. Examples include his description of the Founding: “At the sound of their trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves...” He is also very descriptive in describing slavery: “never bought and sold like cattle – never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion – never subjected to the lash of brutal taskmasters.”

John C. Calhoun, Speech on Abolition Petitions, 1837

1. Calhoun states that Southerners will not give up their “institutions” and that to do so would result in a war. He further states that only the destruction of one of the races would make abolition feasible.
2. Calhoun says that slavery is “a positive good” rather than an evil. Further, he states that it is good for both whites and blacks.

U.S. Supreme Court, *U.S. v. Amistad* 40 US 518, 1841

1. The Declaration states that all men are created free and equal, and Adams likely used this in his argument to justify that the Africans were not Spanish property but free men.
2. The Africans on board the ship made the decision to fight for their freedom and were successful. Individuals against slavery in the United States used their money and influence to take up their cause in the court system. By using due process and legal arguments, they made the Amistad case a victory in the larger fight to end slavery in the United States.

The Underground Railroad and Networks to Freedom

1. Answers may include: information about fugitive slave laws, data on who successfully ran away, more information about “conductors” and “station” operators.
2. Fugitive Slave Laws made it more difficult for enslaved people to run away to the North. Only outside the borders of the United States could they escape these laws’ jurisdictions. Enslaved individuals also escaped to Mexico and the Caribbean, also outside the United States’ borders.

Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”, 1851

1. Truth referenced her harsh treatment as a slave as evidence that a woman is equal to a man.
2. Truth used her own body and her own experience to show the pain and suffering she endured while enslaved. Her reference to losing her children under the system of slavery is deeply affecting.

Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 1845 and Solomon Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, 1853

1. Calhoun’s perspective of slavery comes from a man defending a system from which he benefits. Not only does he defend it, but he says it is a positive thing for both the enslaved and the slaveholder. Northrup’s narrative counters this by offering a heartbreaking example of the brutality of slavery as experienced by those who are actually enslaved. His account is especially moving as it involves young children being taken from their mothers and the heartbreak it caused.
2. This passage is emotionally moving and would garner attention and the sympathy of individuals to the abolitionist cause.

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

1. Fitzhugh says dependence is the basis for affection, such as a child’s dependence on his or her parents. Slaves, he argues, are dependent on their masters; therefore, there is mutual affection between them. The implication is that slaves are like children.

2. Fitzhugh implies that “northern brethren” are more concerned with profits than human affection (“we are not in a hurry to send our children into the world, to push their way and make their fortunes”), and that their relationships are the worse for it (“We are better husbands, better fathers, better friends, and better neighbors than our Northern brethren”). Slavery is preferable in his worldview because it creates a society based on affection of the childlike slaves for their benevolent owner.
3. Calhoun and Fitzhugh either state or allude to their racist belief that blacks are inferior to whites. This alleged inferiority justifies their acceptance of slavery.

U.S. Congress, An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas (Kansas-Nebraska Act), 1854

1. The Kansas-Nebraska Act declared the Missouri Compromise of 1820 void.
2. These two acts show a changing and conflicted national policy toward slavery’s expansion, which divided the sections of the country and the political parties. This conflict was apparent in the Founding era as well (Lesson 1), as shown by the differing stances on slavery in the Northwest Ordinance (which banned it) and the Southwest Ordinance (which stated that slavery could not be banned).

Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, 1854

1. Lincoln states that the Kansas-Nebraska Act is a way to allow the spread of slavery, and that slavery is a “monstrous injustice.” He says its existence makes the United States a mockery of justice and is hypocritical for a free government and free society.
2. Lincoln states that the “fundamental principles of civil liberty” espoused in the Declaration are being threatened by slavery’s expansion because it is a contradiction of those principles.

U.S. Supreme Court, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* 60 US 393, 1856

1. Taney's language clearly indicates that he considered African Americans inferior, particularly in the final sentence: "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." The final phrase (underlined) sounds very much like Calhoun's argument that slavery is a "positive good" and Fitzhugh's argument that enslaved men and women were happy. With this ruling, the Chief Justice embraced the view that the Constitution was a pro slavery document.
2. The ruling explicitly states that African Americans are not equal to whites and, therefore, not entitled to the universal principles of the Declaration of Independence. Moreover, Taney asserted that free blacks were not citizens during the time of the Founding, but his history was incorrect because they had civil rights in 5 states during the Founding.

John Brown's Last Speech, 1859

1. Brown stated that not only was he not guilty, but what he did was right and in line with biblical teachings.
2. Quaker opposition to slavery was also rooted in biblical and moral arguments for the equality of all men and women. However, Quakers did not use violence to achieve their ends like Brown. Later objectors such as Thomas Paine and Belinda Sutton also rooted their opposition to slavery in Founding principles, which Brown did not reference in his final speech.
3. Students should support their opinions with detailed explanations.

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1860

1. Jacobs is describing the common practice of white men fathering children with slave women.
2. According to Jacobs, these children were often sold so the mistress would not have to see them.

Chart: Slave population in 1860

1. Slavery was most heavily concentrated in the South, but states along the border of the North (such as Delaware and Maryland) also allowed slavery.
2. These states allowed slavery but remained loyal to the Union.

Graphic Organizer for Document Analysis

Document Title and Date	Main Ideas	Connection to or Violation of Founding Principles
Enactment of Hereditary Slavery Law, Virginia, 1662	Slaves follow status of mother (codifying slavery)	Predates Founding
Germantown Friends Protest Against Slavery, 1688	Group protesting slavery on religious and moral grounds	Predates Founding
An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves, South Carolina, 1740	Slaves follow status of mother (codifying slavery)	Predates Founding
John Woolman, "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," 1754	Individual protesting slavery based on its violation of natural right of freedom	Predates Founding; "preview" of Declaration's claim that all are equal
Thomas Paine, "African Slavery in America," 1775	Individual protesting slavery by pointing out hypocrisy of colonists claiming they are enslaved by Britain when they allow slavery of African Americans	Predates Founding, "preview" of Declaration's claim that all are equal
Belinda Sutton, Petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1783	Use of courts for just compensation for work	Use of courts or due process to secure justice

Correspondence between Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson, 1791	Sharing of almanac, criticism of slavery and racial prejudices	Quotes/points out hypocrisy of Declaration's claim to natural rights/equality
Ohio State Constitution, 1803 and Black Code, 1804	Paraphrases Declaration to say all are equal, but sets up limits to civil rights of African Americans	Hypocrisy/conflicting views of what "equality" means
U.S. Congress: An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves, 1807	Bans slave trade	A step toward equality and abolition?
James Forten, from Letter I: Letters from a Man of Color, on a Late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania, 1813	Protests potential limits to civil rights of African Americans	Quotes Declaration and points out role of African Americans in securing the country's liberty
U.S. Congress: An Act to Authorize the People of the Missouri Territory to Form a Constitution and State Government (Missouri Compromise), 1820	Bans slavery north of the 36° 30' parallel	Attempt at limiting slavery; but continues in south
David Walker, Appeal, in Four Articles, 1829	African Americans should be treated as equals and should rise up against slave owners	Based on argument of equality

The Underground Railroad and Networks to Freedom	Enslaved individuals secure their own freedom by running away; Churches played a prominent role	Enslaved people secure their own freedom at great personal cost
Maria Stewart Advocates Education for African American Women, 1832	Individual advocating for education for African American women and girls as path to empowerment	Based on argument of equality
William Lloyd Garrison, American Anti-Slavery Society Declaration of Sentiments, 1833	Protesting slavery by referring to the Declaration of Independence as the “corner-stone” of the “Temple of Freedom”	Clear argument that slavery is at odds with the Declaration
John C. Calhoun, Speech on Abolition Petitions, 1837	Individual arguing that slavery is a “positive good” because African Americans are inherently inferior (justifying slavery)	Argument based on inherent inequality
U.S. Supreme Court, <i>U.S. v. Amistad</i> 40 US 518, 1841	Captured Africans who mutiny and take over the slave ship are declared to be free	Arguments in favor of mutineers quote the Declaration of Independence
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 1845	Individual pointing out the inhumanity/brutality of slavery-beatings/violence	Realization that he is a man, an equal, and he can and will fight back and cease to think of himself as a slave

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" 1851	Formerly enslaved woman arguing for both women's rights and abolition	Based on argument of equality of both races AND sexes
Solomon Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, 1853	Individual pointing out the inhumanity/brutality of slavery-selling children from mothers	Exposing clear and heartbreaking violation of idea of equality and justice
George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society, 1854	Individual arguing that slavery is preferable to factories and industrialization in the north because it's based on benevolence (justifying slavery)	Argument based on inherent inequality
U.S. Congress, An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas (Kansas-Nebraska Act), 1854	Repeals Missouri Compromise-creates policy of "popular sovereignty"	Laws in conflict with each other; nation divided
Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, 1854	Criticism of Kansas Nebraska Act's allowing the continuation of slavery	Calls the law is a "monstrous injustice" in violation of the Declaration of Independence
U.S. Supreme Court, Dred Scott v. Sandford 60 US 393, 1856	7-2 ruling that African Americans were not citizens and had no right to sue in court Congress did not have the constitutional authority to ban slavery from the territories	Argument based on inherent inequality
John Brown's Last Speech, 1859	Violence in the name of abolition is justified	Biblical argument against slavery vs. natural rights

Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 1860	Inhumanity/brutality of slavery-sexual predation	Exposing clear and heartbreaking violation of idea of equality and justice
Chart: Slave population in 1860	Slavery was heavily prevalent in the deep and lower south due to codification (children of enslaved mothers are also enslaved); Slavery has legally continued so long that the enslaved population in some places outnumbers the white population	N/A

Concluding Analysis - Suggested Answers

Document Title and Date	Laws and Policy	The Courts	"We the People" - Individuals and Groups
Enactment of Hereditary Slavery Law, Virginia, 1662	<i>Laws codifying slavery</i>		
Germantown Friends Protest Against Slavery, 1688			Group protesting slavery on religious and moral grounds
An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves, South Carolina, 1740	Laws codifying slavery		

John Woolman, “Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes,” 1754			Individual protesting slavery based on its violation of natural right of freedom
Thomas Paine, “African Slavery in America,” 1775			Individual protesting slavery by pointing out hypocrisy of colonists claiming they are enslaved by Britain when they allow slavery of African Americans
Belinda Sutton, Petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1783		Individual using courts to receive just compensation for her work while enslaved	Individual using courts to receive just compensation for her work while enslaved
Correspondence between Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson, August, 1791			Individual protesting slavery on moral and religious grounds and also by pointing out hypocrisy Declaration of Independence in violated natural rights of enslaved people
Ohio State Constitution, 1803, and Black Code, 1804	Constitution bans slavery yet law sets up restrictions for blacks as second class citizens		
U.S. Congress: An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves, 1807	Banning of slave trade in the year first allowed by the Constitution		

James Forten, from Letter I: Letters from a Man of Color, on a Late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania, 1813			Individual protesting bill intended to limit rights of African Americans by pointing out hypocrisy Declaration of Independence and the role of African Americans in helping achieve independence
U.S. Congress: An Act to Authorize the People of the Missouri Territory to Form a Constitution and State Government (Missouri Compromise), 1820	Sets boundary for slavery's expansion; attempt at compromise		
David Walker, Appeal, in Four Articles, 1829			Individual demanding equal treatment ("treat us like men") and for enslaved people to rebel
The Underground Railroad and Networks to Freedom			Enslaved individuals secure their own freedom by running away; churches played a prominent role
Maria Stewart Advocates Education for African American Women, 1832			Individual advocating for education for African American women and girls as path to empowerment

William Lloyd Garrison, American Anti-Slavery Society Declaration of Sentiments, 1833			Protesting slavery by referring to the Declaration of Independence as the “corner-stone” of the “Temple of Freedom”
John C. Calhoun, Speech on Abolition Petitions, 1837			Individual arguing that slavery is a “positive good” because African Americans are inherently inferior (justifying slavery)
U.S. Supreme Court, <i>U.S. v. Amistad</i> 40 US 518, 1841		Captured Africans who mutiny and take over the slave ship are declared to be free; arguments quote the Declaration of Independence	
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 1845			Individual pointing out the inhumanity/brutality of slavery-beatings
Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I A Woman?,” 1851			Formerly enslaved woman arguing for both women’s rights and abolition
Solomon Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, 1853			Individual pointing out the inhumanity/brutality of slavery-selling children from mothers
George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South, or, the Failure of Free Society, 1854			Individual arguing that slavery is preferable to factories and industrialization in the north because it’s based on benevolence (justifying slavery)

U.S. Congress, An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas (Kansas-Nebraska Act), 1854	Repeals Missouri Compromise - creates policy of "popular sovereignty" --settlers in each territory would vote to decide if slavery would be allowed or not		
Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, 1854			Criticism of Kansas Nebraska Act's allowing the continuation of slavery, which is a "monstrous injustice" in violation of the Declaration of Independence
U.S. Supreme Court, <i>Dred Scott v. Sandford</i> 60 US 393, 1856		7-2 ruling established ruled two things: first, African Americans were not citizens and had no right to sue in court; and second, Congress did not have the constitutional authority to ban slavery from the territories *Contrast with Amistad ruling	
John Brown's Last Speech, 1859			Individual saying that violence in the name of abolition is justified; uses Biblical argument against slavery

Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 1860			Individual pointing out the inhumanity/brutality of slavery-sexual predation
Chart: Slave population in 1860	Slavery was heavily prevalent in the deep and lower south due to codification (children of enslaved mothers are also enslaved)		

- Answers may include:
 - Abolition predated the Declaration of Independence based on religious arguments and arguments based on natural law.
 - Several documents explicitly reference the Declaration of Independence and its claim that all men are created equal in their attack.
 - Abolition became personal with formerly enslaved individuals writing and speaking about their experiences living under such a system.
 - Courts and policies both helped and hindered the cause with conflicting rulings/legislation.
 - Both African American and white individuals worked to end slavery.
- The codification of slavery meant that slavery was formally written into law. Children of enslaved mothers, regardless of who their father was, were to follow the status (enslaved) of their mother. This meant that a race-based system of slavery was now law, and that the population of enslaved individuals in the United States would increase by natural means.
- Answers may include: Slavery was deeply engrained in the economies of many regions. To end slavery would cause a major divide in the Union, which is precisely what it does with the Civil War. The longer slavery endured, the more entrenched the system and prejudices became, making it difficult to end the institution.

4. Answers may include:
 - Courts hindered the cause with conflicting rulings in the Amistad and Dred Scott cases.
 - Policies and laws were contradictory (banning slavery in Ohio yet setting up Black Codes, banning the spread of slavery in some sections of the Union in the Missouri Compromise then repealing it with the Kansas-Nebraska Act).
 - Both supporters (John C. Calhoun and George Fitzhugh) and opponents of slavery spoke out and wrote about their views. Opponents of slavery advocated for abolition through peaceful means and also by advocating direct action and violence (David Walker, John Brown).
5. Students should support their opinions with historical reasoning and specific evidence contained in the documents.