

# Primary Source

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



How did the principles of the Declaration of Independence contribute to the quest to end slavery from colonial times to the outbreak of the Civil War?

- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice from the colonial era to the outbreak of the Civil War.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest to end slavery.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

## Essential Vocabulary

Posterity	Children or future generations
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## Building Context

Quaker objections to slavery continued throughout the colonial period, though some Quakers were slaveholders themselves. John Woolman worked in various trades but was primarily a traveling Quaker preacher. He became increasingly critical of slaveholding and published "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes" in 1754 to denounce slavery and advocate abolitionism.

## “Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes”

Source: [https://archive.org/stream/considerationson00wool/considerationson00wool\\_divu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/considerationson00wool/considerationson00wool_divu.txt)

If I purchase a man who has never forfeited his liberty, the natural right of freedom is in him; and shall I keep him and his **posterity** [children or future generations] in servitude and ignorance? ‘How should I approve of this conduct, were I in his circumstances, and he in mine?’... We may further consider, that they are now amongst us, and people of our nation were the cause of their being here; that whatsoever difficulty accrues thereon, we are justly chargeable with, and to bear all inconveniences attending it with a serious and weighty concern of mind to do our duty by them, is the best we can do.

Notes

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What is the significance of Woolman asking his reader, “How should I approve of this conduct, were I in his circumstances, and he in mine?”

2. Compare Woolman’s 1754 argument against slavery with the 1688 Quaker petition in Document 2. In what ways is it similar? Different?