

# Primary Source

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



## 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.

### Building Context

Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution declared that “Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit,” meaning the slave trade could not be banned by Congress until 1808. Congress passed the law, President Thomas Jefferson signed it in 1807, and it went into effect January 1, 1808, the very first day Congress could act.

### Act of 1807

#### Source:

[https://wayback.archive-it.org/13235/20200727232603/http://abolition.nypl.org/content/docs/text/Act\\_of\\_1807.pdf](https://wayback.archive-it.org/13235/20200727232603/http://abolition.nypl.org/content/docs/text/Act_of_1807.pdf)

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eight, it shall not be lawful to import or bring into the United States or the territories thereof from any foreign kingdom, place, or country, any negro, mulatto, or person

Notes

of colour, with intent to hold, sell, or dispose of such negro, mulatto, or person of colour, as a slave, or to be held to service or labour.	
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### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. Refer to Appendix: Annotated Founding Documents. How does the language of the U.S. Constitution and that of this act differ when describing slavery? Why might this be?

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2. Do you think the legal end of U.S. participation in the international slave trade should have been considered a victory for the abolitionist cause? Explain your reasoning.

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