

DBQ 4: Abolition and the Underground Railroad

Historical Context:

1619 marked the beginning of slavery in North America as 20 African captives were sold in the colony of Jamestown. Although slavery had existed elsewhere in the world, this event gave rise to the establishment of plantation economics in the south. Throughout the next 250 years the institution of slavery differed in the south from the north leading to split views and the birth of the abolition movement. White colonists and free blacks began voicing their opinions for equality for all people regardless of skin color. Many people who sympathized with the cause helped slaves escape to the north along the Underground Railroad, a network of safe stops on route to free states and Canada. These views and actions would ultimately set the United States on a path to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

Knowledge Product: The following question is based on the accompanying documents (1-7). As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view.

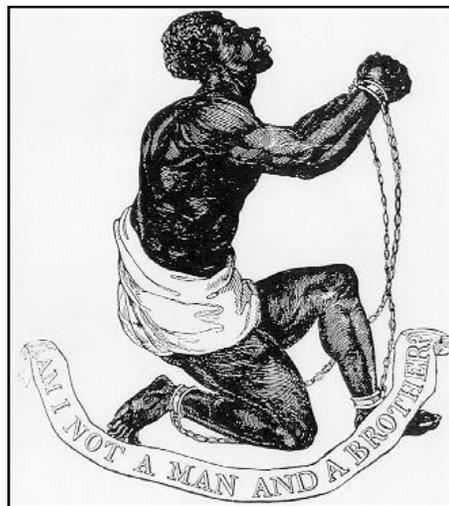
Be sure to:

- 1-Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
- 2-Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
- 3-Based on your own knowledge and on the formation found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answer the question.
- 4-Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
- 5-Write a well organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and your own knowledge outside of the documents.

TASK: Using the information from the documents and your knowledge of global history, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part B essay in which you will be asked to

- Discuss the various efforts of abolitionists to end the institution of slavery in the United States.
- Describe the design of the Underground Railroad and ways abolitionists and slaves made use of this system.

Document 1: "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?"



Josiah Wedgewood mass-produced this medallion in 1787 to raise awareness of the evils of slavery. The image was placed on jewelry and hair pieces in major cities and worn by abolitionists.

1) What was the goal of the image and distribution of the image shown above?

Document 2: Map of Slave and Non-Slave States in 1861



1) How did the number of free states and slave states change from 1789 to 1861?

2) Identify six slave states along the Atlantic Coastline?

Document 3: Harriet Tubman and Arnold Gragston excerpts

“If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If there's shouting after you, keep going. Don't ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going.”

Tubman made 19 trips to Maryland and helped 300 people to freedom. During these dangerous journeys she helped rescue members of her own family, including her 70-year-old parents.

“[I guess] I could be called a ‘conductor’ on the underground railway, only we didn’t call it that then. I don’t know as we called it anything; we just knew there was a lot of slaves always a-wantin’ to get free, and I had to help ‘em.”

1) What did it mean to be a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad?

2) What obstacles did Gragston and Tubman encounter on their journeys?

Document 4: Map of Underground Railroad c. 1860



- 1) What directions did slaves often take when escaping?

- 2) What areas of New York were part of the Underground Railroad?

Document 5: Frederick Douglass narrative

"Now it was starvation, causing us to eat our own flesh; — now we were contending with the waves, and were drowned; — now we were overtaken, and torn to pieces by the fangs of the terrible bloodhound. We were stung by scorpions, chased by wild beasts, bitten by snakes, and finally, after having nearly reached the desired spot, — after swimming rivers, encountering wild beasts, sleeping in the woods, suffering hunger and nakedness, — we were overtaken by our pursuers, and, in our resistance, we were shot dead upon the spot!"

-Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was a slave that escaped to freedom and voiced his opinion against slavery. He was the leader of the abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, and was great friends with men such as William Lloyd Garrison.

- 1) What fears did Douglass *imagine* could happen to him when he escaped from slavery?

- 2) What was the name of the newspaper Douglass was the leader of?

Document 6: Narrative of Arnold Gragston

“Well, pretty soon I saw a tall light and I remembered what the old lady had told me about looking for that light and rowing to it. I did; and when I got up to it, two men reached down and grabbed her; I started tremblin' all over again, and prayin'. Then, one of the men took my arm and I just felt down inside of me that the Lord had got ready for me. "You hungry, Boy?" is what he asked me, and if he hadn't been holdin' me I think I would have fell backward into the river.

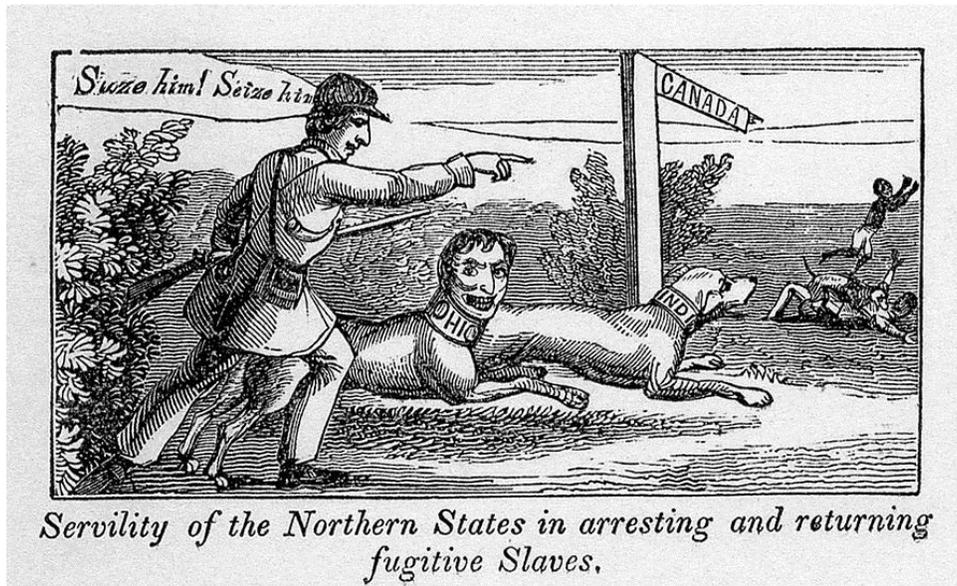
That was my first trip; it took me along time to get over my scared feelin', but I finally did, and I soon found myself goin' back across the river, with two and three people, and sometimes a whole boatload. I got so I used to make three and four trips a month.

What did my passengers look like? I can't tell you any more about it than you can, and you wasn't there. After that first girl—no, I never did see her again—I never saw my passengers. I[t] would have to be the "black nights" of the moon when I would carry them, and I would meet 'em out in the open or in a house without a single light. The only way I knew who they were was to ask them; "What you say?" And they would answer, "Menare." I don't know what that word meant—it came from the Bible. I only know that that was the password I used..."

1) What directions did slaves often take when escaping?

2) What areas of New York were part of the Underground Railroad?

Document 7: Political Cartoon



1) What dangers to escaping slaves does the cartoon show?

Document 8: Lyrics to *Follow the Drinking Gourd*

Follow the drinking gourd!
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is a–waiting for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is a–waiting for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

The riverbank makes a very good road,
The dead trees will show you the way.
Left foot, peg foot, traveling on,
Follow the drinking gourd.

The river ends between two hills,
Follow the drinking gourd.
There's another river on the other side,
Follow the drinking gourd.

When the great big river meets the little river,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is a–waiting for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

This slave song was actually a code of directions explaining how to escape from the southern slave states. The code told people who understood it when to leave, where to travel, and how far to go on each part of the journey.

1) What does the “drinking gourd” refer to in the songs lyrics?

2) How might songs help slaves who planned to escape from being caught?

Document 9: Address to the Slaves of the United States

The abolitionists of the North are the only true and unyielding friends on whom you can rely. They will never deceive nor betray you. They have made your cause their own, and they mean to be true to themselves and to you, whatever may be the consequence.

They are continually increasing in number, in influence, in enterprise and determination; and, judging from the success which has already attended their measures, they anticipate that, in a comparatively short period, the entire North will receive you with open arms, and give you shelter and protection, as fast as you escape from the South.

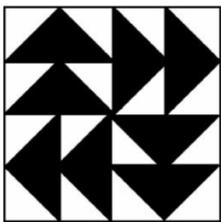
We, who now address you, are united with them in spirit and design. We glory in the name of abolitionists, for it signifies friendship for all who are pining in servitude. We advise you to seize every opportunity to escape from your masters, and, fixing your eyes on the North star, travel on until you reach a land of liberty.

Excerpt from "The Liberator", a Boston newspaper operated by William Lloyd Garrison, a white abolitionist from New England

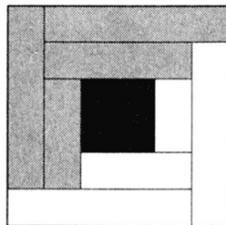
1) What does Garrison say about the growth of abolition in the North?

2) What advice does Garrison have to all slaves and where does he suggest they go?

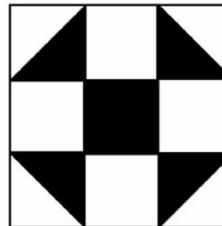
Document 10: Freedom Quilt Symbols



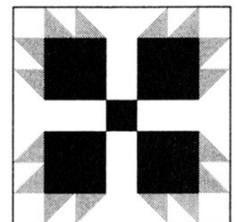
Flying Geese
Follow the geese,
they will fly north



Log Cabin
This is a safe house
to seek shelter in



Shoofly
There is a friendly
guide nearby



Bear's Paw
Follow bear tracks
to clean water

Abolitionists used patterns made into quilts to help slaves along their route to freedom. There were many symbols in addition to the ones pictures above.

1) Why would abolitionists use quilts and patterns to communicate with fugitive slaves instead of posters or written text?

Document 11: *Freedom House* - Poem by Unknown Author

Proud to have served the North
Helping slaves be free.
Passing through my walls
At the home of Featherly.

Hiding them in cellars
During most of the day,
But when the skies turned dark,
Through my secret part to the Bay.

They couldn't have escaped without me,
Because, when I hid a slave,
The South didn't know where to look
They were in my secret cave

- 1) Was the author of this poem supportive of the abolitionist movement? What evidence suggests this?

- 2) Describe the conditions slaves experienced as they were being hidden?
