Freedom Takes Root

Rights, resistance, and Black institutions in Alabama

SS24.AS.14 "Explain how emancipation and Reconstruction produced both an expansion of rights and freedoms and a backlash against this expansion. 14a Trace the history of Black institutions in Alabama from their establishment during Reconstruction to..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two expanded rights, circle two barriers to using those rights, and write 1 and 2 beside Lincoln Normal School's early and later roles to track how freedom grew, met resistance, and endured.

What Freedom Required

1. After the Civil War, emancipation ended slavery in Alabama, but freedom needed institutions to take root. During Reconstruction, the Fourteenth Amendment recognized citizenship and equal protection, while the Fifteenth barred denying men the vote because of race. Black Alabamians voted and served in the state legislature. They also built churches and schools. In 1867, formerly enslaved people founded Lincoln Normal School in Marion to train Black teachers. Its classrooms turned a legal promise into a way to expand education.

2. These gains met resistance. Alabama's 1865 Black Codes sought to control Black workers through labor rules and vagrancy penalties. Later, many families became sharecroppers, farming land owned by others for a share of the crop. Debt and unfair accounts often kept them tied to that land. White supremacist violence, including threats against voters, made exercising political rights dangerous. Each barrier worked differently: laws restricted choices, debt limited mobility, and terror discouraged public action.

3. After Reconstruction, Alabama's 1901 constitution used poll taxes and literacy tests to keep many Black citizens from voting, reversing political gains without restoring slavery. Yet Black institutions endured. Lincoln Normal School moved to Montgomery in 1887 and eventually became Alabama State University, which still educates students today. Black churches also remained places to gather and organize; in the twentieth century, some supported civil rights campaigns. Their survival shows that backlash narrowed freedom, but did not erase the institutions people had built.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did voting rights and the founding of schools expand freedom in different ways?

2. How did Black Codes and sharecropping debt each limit workers' choices?

3. How did threats against voters and the 1901 constitution weaken Reconstruction's political gains?

4. How did Lincoln Normal School's role continue after Reconstruction?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence museum label about freedom and backlash in Alabama. Explain one Reconstruction gain, two different barriers, and how a Black institution carried opportunity into the present; end with a claim about why legal rights alone did not guarantee freedom.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.AS.14

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two expanded rights, circle two barriers to using those rights, and write 1 and 2 beside Lincoln Normal School's early and later roles to track how freedom grew, met resistance, and endured. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did voting rights and the founding of schools expand freedom in different ways?	**Voting rights gave Black men a role in government; schools expanded access to education and trained teachers.**
2	How did Black Codes and sharecropping debt each limit workers' choices?	**Black Codes imposed labor rules and vagrancy penalties; sharecropping debt could keep families tied to land they did not own.**
3	How did threats against voters and the 1901 constitution weaken Reconstruction's political gains?	**Threats made voting dangerous, while poll taxes and literacy tests kept many Black citizens from voting.**
4	How did Lincoln Normal School's role continue after Reconstruction?	**Founded to train Black teachers, it moved to Montgomery and eventually became Alabama State University, which educates students today.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Freedom in Alabama was more than the end of slavery. During Reconstruction, Black men gained voting rights, and Black communities opened schools. Black Codes restricted workers, while sharecropping debt could trap families on farms. Despite these barriers, the school founded as Lincoln Normal grew into Alabama State University, which educates students today. These struggles show why a right written into law did not guarantee that everyone could use it.

Accept accurate alternatives from the passage, including violence or voting restrictions as barriers. The museum label should connect a gain, two distinct barriers, and an institution's lasting role rather than list them without explanation.