# Resistance and Reaction

How Black resistance shaped southern laws

**SS24.US1.10a** "Describe forms of resistance to slavery demonstrated by enslaved and free Black Americans, and assess the impact of resistance on southern states' slave codes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two forms of resistance by enslaved people and circle two actions by free Black people. Number each restriction you find, then draw an arrow from it to the resistance it was meant to stop.

### When Resistance Met Restriction

1. At night, an enslaved person might risk punishment to teach a neighbor to read, hide food for someone escaping, or refuse an overseer's orders. These acts challenged slavery's demand for obedience and control. Some enslaved people escaped to free states, while others held secret meetings to worship and share plans. Resistance also took armed form. In 1831, Nat Turner led an uprising of enslaved people in Virginia that killed dozens of white residents. White militias crushed the revolt, and many Black people, including people who had not joined it, were killed afterward.

2. Free Black Americans also resisted, even though they were not enslaved. In 1829, David Walker, a free Black abolitionist in Boston, published his Appeal, which condemned slavery and urged enslaved people to resist. Copies reached the South, where officials feared the pamphlet could encourage rebellion. Free Black neighbors and relatives also aided people escaping slavery by offering shelter, money, or directions. Such actions connected people across state lines. They did not all involve violence, but each threatened slaveholders' power by helping enslaved people gain knowledge, safety, or freedom.

3. Slave codes were state laws that controlled enslaved people's lives. After Turner's uprising, Virginia imposed new restrictions on gatherings of enslaved and free Black people and on Black preaching. Other southern states tightened or enforced laws against teaching enslaved people to read and against distributing abolitionist writings. Some restrictions existed before these acts of resistance, so resistance was not the only cause of every law. Still, lawmakers used fears of escape and revolt to justify stronger surveillance and penalties. The restrictions show one consequence of resistance: Black Americans challenged slavery, while authorities tried to block paths to freedom and collective action.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did teaching someone to read and Turner's uprising challenge slavery in different ways?

2. How did David Walker's Appeal resist slavery, and why did southern officials fear it?

3. Connect one form of resistance in the passage to a restriction southern lawmakers imposed or enforced. Explain the connection.

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say that resistance caused every restriction in southern slave codes?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label that compares one form of resistance by an enslaved person with one action by a free Black person. Use two details from the passage, then assess how restrictions could make those actions harder without ending the goal behind them.

ANSWER KEY

# Resistance and Reaction

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.10a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two forms of resistance by enslaved people and circle two actions by free Black people. Number each restriction you find, then draw an arrow from it to the resistance it was meant to stop. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did teaching someone to read and Turner's uprising challenge slavery in different ways? | **Teaching someone to read challenged control over enslaved people's knowledge. Turner's armed uprising directly challenged slaveholders' authority.** |
| 2 | How did David Walker's Appeal resist slavery, and why did southern officials fear it? | **The Appeal condemned slavery and urged enslaved people to resist. Officials feared it could encourage rebellion.** |
| 3 | Connect one form of resistance in the passage to a restriction southern lawmakers imposed or enforced. Explain the connection. | **For example, officials restricted Black gatherings after Turner's uprising because they feared people might organize another revolt.** |
| 4 | Why would it be inaccurate to say that resistance caused every restriction in southern slave codes? | **Some restrictions existed before the acts of resistance described in the passage. Lawmakers later tightened or enforced laws in response to fears of escape and revolt.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An enslaved person who hid food for someone escaping helped turn a plan for freedom into action. David Walker resisted in another way: his Appeal urged enslaved people to resist and reached readers in the South. Laws restricting gatherings and abolitionist writings could make it harder for people to plan together or share ideas. Yet those laws could not remove their reasons for seeking freedom, so people might look for less visible ways to help one another.

Accept other passage-supported connections between resistance and restrictions. For the museum label, look for a comparison, two accurate details, and a reasoned assessment of the restrictions' limits.