Claims Under Scrutiny

How abolitionists answered defenses of slavery

SS24.US1.10c "Identify leading abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, and summarize the arguments they made in opposition to slavery and in rebuttal to pro-slavery rhetoric."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one argument made by Douglass and one made by Garrison. Circle the pro-slavery claim each argument challenges, then number each claim and its rebuttal with a matching number.

Answering the Defenders of Slavery

1. Imagine hearing a speaker praise slavery as a kind system, then hearing someone who had lived under it take the stage. Frederick Douglass escaped slavery in 1838 and became a leading abolitionist through speeches and newspapers. In his 1845 *Narrative*, he described beatings, family separation, and efforts to keep enslaved people from learning to read. These details challenged the claim that enslavers acted like caring guardians. Douglass also showed that an enslaved person's ability to think, learn, and argue was no less human than anyone else's. His testimony turned the lived reality of slavery into a rebuttal of its defenders.

2. William Lloyd Garrison founded the antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* in 1831. He demanded immediate emancipation, without payments to enslavers, because no person could rightfully own another person. When defenders claimed that slavery was lawful property ownership, Garrison answered with a moral argument: a law could protect an injustice without making it right. Some defenders warned that ending slavery at once would disrupt society. Garrison held that delaying freedom to protect the comfort or wealth of enslavers only extended the wrong. He used his paper to press readers, especially those who called themselves Christians, to reject slavery rather than excuse it.

3. Douglass and Garrison shared the demand for freedom, but their words exposed different weak points in pro-slavery claims. In an 1852 speech about the Fourth of July, Douglass contrasted national celebrations of liberty with the continued enslavement of millions. That contrast challenged the idea that the United States already honored freedom for all. Garrison, meanwhile, insisted that appeals to law and social stability could not settle whether slavery was just. Neither accepted the claim that slavery benefited the people held in bondage. Their arguments asked audiences to test reassuring claims against both human experience and principles of equal rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Douglass use his experiences to challenge the claim that enslavers were caring guardians?

2. What pro-slavery idea did Douglass challenge by contrasting Fourth of July celebrations with slavery?

3. How did Garrison answer the claim that slavery was lawful property ownership?

4. How did Garrison answer the warning that immediate emancipation would disrupt society?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional 1850 newspaper claims, "Slavery is kind, and ending it now would harm society." Write a four-sentence reply that names Douglass and Garrison, gives a different rebuttal from each, and explains how their arguments work together.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.10c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one argument made by Douglass and one made by Garrison. Circle the pro-slavery claim each argument challenges, then number each claim and its rebuttal with a matching number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Douglass use his experiences to challenge the claim that enslavers were caring guardians?	**He described beatings, family separation, and efforts to prevent enslaved people from learning to read, showing that their treatment was not caring.**
2	What pro-slavery idea did Douglass challenge by contrasting Fourth of July celebrations with slavery?	**He challenged the idea that the United States honored freedom for all while millions remained enslaved.**
3	How did Garrison answer the claim that slavery was lawful property ownership?	**He argued that no person could rightfully own another and that a law protecting injustice did not make it right.**
4	How did Garrison answer the warning that immediate emancipation would disrupt society?	**He argued that delaying freedom to protect enslavers' comfort or wealth only prolonged an injustice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Frederick Douglass's accounts of beatings and separated families refute the claim that slavery was kind. His firsthand evidence exposes what a comforting description hides. William Lloyd Garrison would reject delay for society's comfort because each day of slavery prolongs an injustice. Together, Douglass's testimony and Garrison's moral argument show why neither kindness nor caution can justify denying freedom.

Accept paraphrases that accurately connect each abolitionist's argument to the claim it rebuts. For Part 3, look for distinct uses of Douglass's firsthand evidence and Garrison's argument against delaying freedom.