

Laws and Slavery

Examine how early national policies limited and protected slavery.

SS.68.AA.2.1 "Explain early congressional actions regarding the institution of slavery (i.e., Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Three-Fifths Compromise, Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves of 1808)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each action taken by the national government, circle its effect on slavery or political power, and number the three actions in the order they appear.

Three Early Decisions

- ① In July 1787, the Confederation Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance to organize the Northwest Territory, land north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River. The law prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude in the territory, except as punishment for a crime. This rule restricted slavery's expansion into that region. It did not free people already enslaved in the states. The ordinance also required the return of people who escaped slavery to lawful claimants.
- ② During the 1787 Constitutional Convention, delegates made the Three-Fifths Compromise. For representation in Congress and for direct taxes, each enslaved person would be counted as three-fifths of a person. Enslaved people gained no voting rights or citizenship through this rule. By increasing the population count used to assign seats, the compromise gave slaveholding states more representatives and electoral votes than they would have received if only free residents were counted. It showed how national political power was tied to slavery.
- ③ Congress passed the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves in 1807. It took effect on January 1, 1808, the earliest date the Constitution allowed Congress to ban the overseas slave trade. The act made it illegal to bring enslaved people into the United States from other countries. It did not end slavery within the United States, and it did not ban the domestic buying and selling of enslaved people. Illegal smuggling continued. Together, these actions placed some limits on slavery while leaving the institution and its political influence in place.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did the Northwest Ordinance restrict, and what did it not end?

2 How did the Three-Fifths Compromise increase the political power of slaveholding states?

3 When did the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves take effect, and what did it make illegal?

4 Why did the 1808 act not end slavery in the United States?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly four sentences that make a claim about how the three actions affected slavery. Use details from all three actions, including one limit on slavery and one way slavery or slaveholding states remained protected.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each action taken by the national government, circle its effect on slavery or political power, and number the three actions in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did the Northwest Ordinance restrict, and what did it not end?	It restricted slavery's expansion into the Northwest Territory. It did not end slavery or free people already enslaved in the states.
2	How did the Three-Fifths Compromise increase the political power of slaveholding states?	It counted each enslaved person as three-fifths of a person when assigning representation. This gave slaveholding states more representatives and electoral votes.
3	When did the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves take effect, and what did it make illegal?	It took effect on January 1, 1808. It made it illegal to bring enslaved people into the United States from other countries.
4	Why did the 1808 act not end slavery in the United States?	It did not ban slavery within the United States or the domestic buying and selling of enslaved people. Illegal smuggling also continued.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The actions limited slavery in certain places and trades, but they did not dismantle it. The Northwest Ordinance barred slavery from the Northwest Territory, and the 1808 act banned overseas imports of enslaved people. However, the Three-Fifths Compromise increased slaveholding states' representation and electoral votes. Slavery continued in the states, while domestic trading and illegal smuggling continued.

Accept equivalent explanations that distinguish limits on slavery's expansion or overseas importation from the continuation of slavery within the states. For the Three-Fifths Compromise, students should explain that the population count increased slaveholding states' representation or electoral votes without giving enslaved people rights.