Work and Freedom

Trace how labor systems changed in early America

5.SS.1.8 "Explain the history of indentured servitude and the slave trade in the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how indentured servitude worked, circle details about the slave trade, and number two changes that happened over time.

Two Labor Systems

1. In the 1600s, English colonies in North America needed workers for farms and other jobs. Some Europeans came as indentured servants. They signed agreements to work for a set number of years in exchange for passage across the Atlantic. Their work could be harsh, and they had few choices while serving. When their time ended, they were legally free, although many still faced poverty.

2. Colonists also forced Africans to work. European and colonial traders bought captive people in Africa and carried them across the Atlantic in crowded ships. Many died during this voyage, called the Middle Passage. Those who survived were sold in the colonies. During the 1600s, colonial laws increasingly made slavery permanent and inherited by children. Unlike indentured servants, enslaved people had no agreed end to their forced labor.

3. As plantation farming grew, enslavers relied more on enslaved labor, especially to grow crops such as tobacco and cotton. In 1808, the United States ended the legal import of enslaved people from other countries. But slavery did not end. Enslavers continued to buy and sell people within the United States, often separating families. The Civil War and the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery in 1865, long after the overseas trade was banned.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did an indentured servant's agreement affect both the person's work and freedom?

2. Why was the Middle Passage part of a trade in people, not a trip the workers chose?

3. How did colonial laws make slavery different from indentured servitude for the next generation?

4. Why did the 1808 ban on overseas imports not end the buying and selling of enslaved people?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a museum displays an indentured servant's agreement beside a notice selling an enslaved person. Write a four-sentence exhibit label explaining what each record reveals, how the slave trade supplied forced labor, and how the two labor systems differed over time. Include one date from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Work and Freedom

GRADE 5 · 5.SS.1.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how indentured servitude worked, circle details about the slave trade, and number two changes that happened over time. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did an indentured servant's agreement affect both the person's work and freedom?	**The person worked for a set number of years in exchange for passage across the Atlantic and was legally free when that time ended.**
2	Why was the Middle Passage part of a trade in people, not a trip the workers chose?	**Traders carried captive Africans across the Atlantic, and survivors were sold in the colonies.**
3	How did colonial laws make slavery different from indentured servitude for the next generation?	**Colonial laws made slavery permanent and inherited by children, while indentured service had a set end date.**
4	Why did the 1808 ban on overseas imports not end the buying and selling of enslaved people?	**Enslavers continued to buy and sell people within the United States.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An indentured servant's agreement promised passage across the Atlantic in return for work for a set number of years. A sale notice shows that an enslaved person could be sold, with no agreed date for freedom. Traders carried captive Africans across the Atlantic, and colonial laws made slavery permanent and inherited by children. Even after the United States banned overseas imports in 1808, people were still sold within the country.

Accept responses that distinguish a time-limited agreement from forced, inherited slavery and connect the sale of captive Africans to the slave trade. For the exhibit label, check for four sentences and a date from the passage.