A Law Divides

How people and groups shaped conflict over slavery

4.H.5 "Explain the roles of various individuals, groups, and movements in the social conflicts leading to the Civil War."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each person or group named in the passage, then underline what each did or wanted. Use your marks to explain their roles in the conflict.

A Knock at the Door

1. Imagine a knock at the door in 1850. A person who had escaped slavery needed a safe place to stay. That year, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. It required officials in free states to help return people who had escaped slavery. Many lawmakers hoped this rule would keep slaveholding states in the Union. Instead, the law carried a bitter argument into Northern towns.

2. Slaveholders wanted escaped people returned because they claimed them as property. People who had escaped slavery wanted to remain free, and some kept moving toward Canada. Abolitionists, people working to end slavery, hid some escapees or spoke against the law. Frederick Douglass, who had escaped slavery himself, used speeches and a newspaper to call for an end to slavery and oppose the law.

3. The law also forced people in free states to choose sides. Some Northerners helped officials capture escapees, while others refused to help. In 1854, thousands of people in Boston protested when officials held Anthony Burns, a man who had escaped slavery. Officials still sent Burns back to Virginia. His case showed how one person's struggle for freedom could bring large groups into conflict over slavery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What did lawmakers hope the Fugitive Slave Act would do, and what happened instead?

2. How did some people who had escaped slavery respond to the law, and what did they want?

3. What role did Frederick Douglass play in the conflict over slavery?

4. How did the Boston protesters' actions differ from the officials' actions in Anthony Burns's case?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence news brief explaining why the Fugitive Slave Act increased conflict instead of settling it. Connect the actions of lawmakers, people who escaped slavery, and abolitionists.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 4 · 4.H.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each person or group named in the passage, then underline what each did or wanted. Use your marks to explain their roles in the conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did lawmakers hope the Fugitive Slave Act would do, and what happened instead?	**Lawmakers hoped it would keep slaveholding states in the Union. Instead, it brought conflict over slavery into Northern towns.**
2	How did some people who had escaped slavery respond to the law, and what did they want?	**They wanted to remain free, and some kept moving toward Canada.**
3	What role did Frederick Douglass play in the conflict over slavery?	**He used speeches and a newspaper to call for an end to slavery and oppose the law.**
4	How did the Boston protesters' actions differ from the officials' actions in Anthony Burns's case?	**Thousands protested while officials held Burns, but officials sent him back to Virginia.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act to keep slaveholding states in the Union. People who escaped slavery tried to stay free, sometimes by traveling toward Canada. Abolitionists hid some escapees and spoke out against the law. Their actions clashed with the law, so Northern towns became places of conflict over slavery.

Accept answers that accurately explain each person's or group's actions and connect those actions to conflict over slavery. Students may use different wording from the passage.