A Nation Divided

How abolitionist actions sharpened the debate over slavery

8.H.20 "Describe the Abolitionist Movement and identify figures and organizations involved in the debate over slavery, including leaders of the Underground Railroad, and how the movement affected the division between the North and South."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways abolitionists fought slavery, circle the names of two Underground Railroad leaders, and write N and S beside one northern and one southern response to abolitionism. Use your marks to trace how the movement deepened the divide between the regions.

Words, Routes, and Resistance

1 On a crowded street in 1830s Boston, a reader might buy an antislavery newspaper and meet a neighbor who wanted it banned. Abolitionists called for an end to slavery, but Americans disagreed about how to achieve it. William Lloyd Garrison published *The Liberator* and helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Members sent speakers and petitions across the country to persuade people that slavery was wrong. Frederick Douglass, who had escaped slavery, spoke and wrote about its cruelty. Their words spread the debate far beyond meetings of lawmakers.

2 For people escaping slavery, public speeches were not enough. The Underground Railroad was a secretive network of people, routes, and safe places, not an actual train. Harriet Tubman returned to the South repeatedly to guide freedom seekers north. In Philadelphia, William Still helped people traveling through the city and recorded many of their stories. Local vigilance committees offered aid and protection. These efforts were dangerous: the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 allowed federal marshals to demand help from bystanders in capturing people accused of escaping slavery, even in free states.

3 Some northerners opposed slavery but feared that resisting federal law would tear the country apart. Others supported the law or profited from slavery's trade. Many southern slaveholders viewed abolitionist speeches and escape networks as threats to their property and political power. They demanded stronger enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, while northern abolitionists protested captures and helped fugitives. Each escape or capture could bring the conflict into a free-state town. As the two regions fought over slavery's future, cooperation grew harder, and the national division deepened.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society work to change opinions about slavery?

2. How did Tubman and Still help people through the Underground Railroad in different ways?

3. Why did the Fugitive Slave Act make Underground Railroad work more dangerous, even in free states?

4. How did northern abolitionists and southern slaveholders respond differently to escapes and captures?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a northern newspaper reports that a local vigilance committee helped a freedom seeker after the Fugitive Slave Act passed. Write a four-sentence editorial explaining why this event might deepen the North-South divide. Name one abolitionist from the passage, describe that person's related work, and contrast northern and southern reactions.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.H.20

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways abolitionists fought slavery, circle the names of two Underground Railroad leaders, and write N and S beside one northern and one southern response to abolitionism. Use your marks to trace how the movement deepened the divide between the regions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society work to change opinions about slavery?	**Garrison published an antislavery newspaper and helped found the society. Its members sent speakers and petitions across the country.**
2	How did Tubman and Still help people through the Underground Railroad in different ways?	**Tubman guided freedom seekers north from the South. Still helped people traveling through Philadelphia and recorded their stories.**
3	Why did the Fugitive Slave Act make Underground Railroad work more dangerous, even in free states?	**It allowed federal marshals to demand help from bystanders in capturing people accused of escaping slavery, including in free states.**
4	How did northern abolitionists and southern slaveholders respond differently to escapes and captures?	**Northern abolitionists protested captures and helped fugitives. Southern slaveholders saw escape networks as a threat and demanded stronger enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town's vigilance committee helped a freedom seeker despite the risk of capture. William Still helped people traveling through Philadelphia, showing how organized aid could challenge enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Northern abolitionists might defend the committee, while other northerners might fear that resistance to federal law would split the country. Southern slaveholders would likely demand stronger enforcement, deepening the divide between the regions.

Accept other passage-supported examples of abolitionist actions and regional reactions. The editorial should use a named person's work to explain the likely conflict, not simply list facts.