Freedom and Its Limits

Assess the early struggle for racial equality in Indiana.

IS.1.26 "Summarize and assess the various actions which characterized the early struggle for civil rights and racial equality in Indiana."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions taken to advance freedom or racial equality, circle limits or setbacks, and number two actions you could compare for their impact.

Changing Indiana, Unevenly

1 In 1816, Indiana's first constitution banned slavery, yet freedom did not arrive simply because words appeared on paper. In 1820, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled that slavery violated that constitution. Enslaved people and their allies could use courts to challenge bondage, but a ruling could not erase prejudice. From the 1820s through the 1840s, Levi and Catharine Coffin sheltered freedom seekers at their home in Newport, Indiana, along the Underground Railroad. This direct help could protect individuals in danger. Still, the 1851 state constitution barred Black people from moving into Indiana, showing how the state could defend freedom while restricting equality.

2 After the Civil War, Indiana lawmakers faced pressure to make public life more equal. A state law in 1869 provided for separate public schools for Black children, but many communities failed to provide equal resources. In 1877, a new law required public schools to admit children without regard to race. Lawmakers also passed an 1885 civil rights law banning racial discrimination in places such as hotels and theaters. These laws gave people rules they could invoke when demanding fair treatment. Yet passing a law did not guarantee that every school, business, or official followed it. Legal change needed local enforcement.

3 Black Hoosiers also built ways to speak for themselves. Founded in 1895, the Indianapolis Recorder reported on Black community life and challenges to discrimination. A newspaper could expose unfair treatment and help readers organize, though publicity alone could not force officials to act. In 1927, Indianapolis opened Crispus Attucks High School for Black students, maintaining separation despite earlier promises of equal school access. Its Black teachers offered valuable learning opportunities within an unequal system. Across these decades, court cases, aid networks, laws, and journalism challenged injustice in different ways. The school showed that progress in one area could exist beside a continuing barrier.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare the 1820 court ruling with the Coffins' work. What could each action accomplish, and what was a limit of one of them?

2. How does the 1851 state constitution complicate a claim that early Indiana consistently defended freedom?

3. Compare the 1877 school law with the opening of Crispus Attucks High School in 1927. What do they show about the reach of legal change?

4. How did the Indianapolis Recorder and the 1885 civil rights law offer different ways to challenge discrimination? Assess one limit of either approach.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word statement to the Indianapolis school board in 1927. Compare two actions from the passage that could advance school equality, judge which offers a stronger starting point, explain one limit of that action, and propose one new step for the board.

ANSWER KEY

Freedom and Its Limits

HIGH SCHOOL · IS.1.26

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions taken to advance freedom or racial equality, circle limits or setbacks, and number two actions you could compare for their impact. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the 1820 court ruling with the Coffins' work. What could each action accomplish, and what was a limit of one of them?	**The ruling gave people a legal basis to challenge slavery, while the Coffins directly sheltered freedom seekers. The ruling could not erase prejudice.**
2	How does the 1851 state constitution complicate a claim that early Indiana consistently defended freedom?	**Although Indiana banned slavery and its courts upheld that ban, the 1851 constitution barred Black people from moving into the state.**
3	Compare the 1877 school law with the opening of Crispus Attucks High School in 1927. What do they show about the reach of legal change?	**The 1877 law required schools to admit children regardless of race, but Crispus Attucks opened as a separate school for Black students. A law could expand access without ending separation.**
4	How did the Indianapolis Recorder and the 1885 civil rights law offer different ways to challenge discrimination? Assess one limit of either approach.	**The Recorder could expose discrimination and help readers organize, while the law gave people a rule to invoke in places such as hotels and theaters. Publicity could not force action, and the law required enforcement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Members of the school board, Indiana's 1877 law requiring schools to admit children regardless of race offers a stronger starting point than newspaper coverage because it gives families a rule to demand fair access. The Indianapolis Recorder can publicize unequal treatment, but reports alone cannot make officials respond. A law also has a limit: Crispus Attucks opened as a separate high school in 1927 despite earlier promises of equal access. I urge the board to review school assignments with Black families before the next term.

Accept different judgments when students accurately compare actions, support their assessment with passage evidence, and identify a plausible limit. For Part 3, the proposed board action must be a new step, not simply a restatement of an action in the passage.