Freedom at the Border

How reform movements shaped Indiana

IS.1.5 "Explain the significance of slavery, abolition, and social reform movements and their impact on the state of Indiana."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline two actions people took against slavery, circle two laws or policies that limited freedom, and number one result of a social reform effort. Use your marks to explain how these choices shaped Indiana.

A Free State with Hard Choices

1 In 1816, Indiana entered the Union with a constitution that prohibited slavery. Yet a legal ban did not erase slavery's reach. Enslaved people lived across the Ohio River in Kentucky, and people escaping bondage sometimes crossed into Indiana. Some Hoosiers helped them; others tried to capture them or defended slavery. In 1850, the federal Fugitive Slave Act required federal officers to enforce the return of people claimed as fugitives from slavery. It also required people called upon to assist those officers to help. The law sharpened a choice for Hoosiers: comply with federal demands or risk punishment for helping someone escape.

2 At Newport, now Fountain City, Levi and Catharine Coffin sheltered freedom seekers in their home during the years before the Civil War. Their work was part of the Underground Railroad, a network of people and routes, not an actual railroad. Black Hoosiers also sheltered travelers and organized against slavery, despite facing discrimination themselves. Abolitionists gave food, directions, and shelter, and some argued publicly that slavery must end. Such actions offered practical help to people in danger and challenged Indiana residents to decide whether a free state should protect freedom seekers when federal law demanded their return.

3 Antislavery organizing overlapped with other campaigns to change Indiana. In the 1840s, educator Caleb Mills pressed lawmakers to support free public schools, arguing that education should not depend on a family's wealth. Women who had participated in reform work also demanded greater rights; a women's rights convention met in Dublin, Indiana, in 1851. Reformers used meetings, speeches, and petitions to press for change, though their goals were not identical. Progress was uneven: Indiana's 1851 constitution barred Black people from moving into the state. Together, these movements expanded public debate and shaped laws, but that exclusion showed how far Indiana remained from equal freedom.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did slavery remain an important issue in Indiana even though the state prohibited it?

2. How did Underground Railroad work affect both freedom seekers and Indiana communities?

3. How could Caleb Mills's school campaign change life in Indiana?

4. How did the 1851 restriction on Black migration limit the progress described in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 95 word museum label answering this question: Was Indiana a free state for everyone? Use evidence from all three paragraphs to connect slavery, abolition, and another reform effort, and explain why your answer is not a simple yes or no.

Freedom at the Border

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two actions people took against slavery, circle two laws or policies that limited freedom, and number one result of a social reform effort. Use your marks to explain how these choices shaped Indiana. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did slavery remain an important issue in Indiana even though the state prohibited it?	**People escaping slavery crossed from Kentucky into Indiana, where residents disagreed about whether to help them or return them.**
2	How did Underground Railroad work affect both freedom seekers and Indiana communities?	**It provided freedom seekers with food, directions, and shelter, while forcing communities to confront the conflict between protecting them and complying with federal law.**
3	How could Caleb Mills's school campaign change life in Indiana?	**His push for free public schools could give children access to education regardless of their families' wealth.**
4	How did the 1851 restriction on Black migration limit the progress described in the passage?	**Although abolitionists worked to protect freedom seekers, Indiana's constitution barred Black people from moving into the state.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Indiana prohibited slavery, but that did not make the state equally free for everyone. People escaping slavery crossed into Indiana from Kentucky, where they faced the risk of capture. Abolitionists, including Black Hoosiers and the Coffins, offered shelter and other help. Reformers also pushed for changes beyond abolition: Caleb Mills called for free public schools that did not depend on family wealth. Still, Indiana's 1851 constitution barred Black people from moving into the state. Indiana's laws and reform movements show both efforts to widen freedom and decisions that sharply limited it.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of each movement's impact. The museum label should use evidence from all three paragraphs and explain both an expansion and a limit of freedom.