Seats and Ships

Two decisions made at the Constitutional Convention

5.C.5.3.C "congressional representation resolved by the Three-Fifths Compromise and the potential for a future ban of the international slave trade."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that explains how enslaved people were counted for representation. Circle the year before which Congress could not ban the international slave trade.

Two Deals at the Convention

1. In 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia to write a new U.S. Constitution. They argued about how many seats each state would have in the House of Representatives. A state's population would help decide its number of seats. Some states wanted to count enslaved people in that population, even though those people could not vote and had no say in the government. Other delegates objected to giving those states more seats.

2. The delegates reached a deal called the Three-Fifths Compromise. For seats in the House, they counted every five enslaved people as three people in a state's population. The same rule also applied when dividing certain federal taxes among states. Enslaved people were not given three-fifths of a vote, or any vote. The rule increased the political power of states where people were enslaved while denying enslaved people a voice.

3. Delegates also argued about ships bringing enslaved people from other countries into the United States. Under another agreement, Congress could not ban this international slave trade before 1808. This did not mean that slavery would end in 1808. It meant Congress would then be allowed to ban the importation of enslaved people. Congress later passed a law ending that importation, which took effect in 1808. Both deals protected slavery at the Convention.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some states want enslaved people counted when deciding House seats?

2. How did the Three-Fifths Compromise count enslaved people for House seats? Did it give them votes?

3. What could Congress not ban before 1808, and what could it ban starting in 1808?

4. Did the agreement about 1808 end slavery that year? Explain using the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum label explaining what these two deals show about whose interests had power. Include a detail about each deal and explain how enslaved people were excluded from the decisions.

ANSWER KEY

Seats and Ships

GRADE 5 · 5.C.5.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that explains how enslaved people were counted for representation. Circle the year before which Congress could not ban the international slave trade. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some states want enslaved people counted when deciding House seats?	**Counting enslaved people would give those states more seats in the House.**
2	How did the Three-Fifths Compromise count enslaved people for House seats? Did it give them votes?	**It counted every five enslaved people as three people in a state's population. It gave them no votes.**
3	What could Congress not ban before 1808, and what could it ban starting in 1808?	**Congress could not ban the international slave trade before 1808. Starting in 1808, it could ban the importation of enslaved people.**
4	Did the agreement about 1808 end slavery that year? Explain using the passage.	**No. It allowed Congress to ban the importation of enslaved people, not slavery itself.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Three-Fifths Compromise gave states that enslaved people more House seats by counting every five enslaved people as three people. Congress also had to wait until 1808 to ban bringing enslaved people from other countries. Enslaved people had no vote or say in the government, even though both deals affected their lives.

Accept answers that distinguish a ban on importing enslaved people from an end to slavery. For the museum label, look for an accurate fact about each deal and a clear explanation that enslaved people had no political voice.