A Union at Stake

Read Lincoln's Cooper Union Address through its central claims.

8.C.12.1.B "Identify President Lincoln's stance on slavery and intention of preserving the Union, as stated in his Cooper Union Address."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two statements that show Lincoln's position on slavery, circle one statement that shows his position on the Union, and number your marks in the order they appear.

Lincoln Speaks at Cooper Union

1. On February 27, 1860, Abraham Lincoln spoke to a crowded hall in New York City. He was not yet president, and the country was arguing over whether slavery could spread into western territories. In his Cooper Union Address, Lincoln examined how the nation's founders had treated that question. He pointed to early federal laws that limited slavery in some territories. To Lincoln, these actions showed that the founders had not meant to leave slavery's spread beyond the reach of the federal government.

2. Lincoln called slavery wrong, but his proposed action had a clear limit. He argued that the federal government could stop slavery from expanding into territories where it did not yet exist. He did not call for the federal government to end slavery at once in states where it was already legal. Instead, he urged his fellow Republicans to stand by their position against expansion. He wanted that position judged by the Constitution and the founders' actions, not by claims that it threatened every state.

3. Lincoln also addressed threats from some Southern leaders to break up the United States if Republicans won power. He asked whether losing an argument over slavery's expansion could justify destroying the government. He rejected the idea that one side could demand its own reading of the Constitution or else end the Union. Near the close, he told Republicans not to be frightened away from their duty by threats of destruction to the government. For Lincoln, opposing slavery's spread and keeping the Union together were not competing goals.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What action did Lincoln support against slavery's spread, and what evidence from the founders did he use to support it?

2. How did Lincoln's position on slavery in the territories differ from his position on slavery in states where it was already legal?

3. How did Lincoln respond to threats to break up the United States?

4. According to the passage, why could Lincoln oppose slavery's spread while also seeking to preserve the Union?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum caption claims, "At Cooper Union, Lincoln demanded the immediate end of slavery everywhere and accepted the breakup of the Union." Write a four-sentence replacement caption that corrects both errors and uses two details from the passage.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two statements that show Lincoln's position on slavery, circle one statement that shows his position on the Union, and number your marks in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What action did Lincoln support against slavery's spread, and what evidence from the founders did he use to support it?	**He supported stopping slavery's expansion into the territories. He cited early federal laws that limited slavery in some territories.**
2	How did Lincoln's position on slavery in the territories differ from his position on slavery in states where it was already legal?	**He supported federal action to stop expansion into the territories, but he did not call for the federal government to end slavery at once in states where it was legal.**
3	How did Lincoln respond to threats to break up the United States?	**He rejected breaking up the government over the dispute and urged Republicans not to abandon their position because of those threats.**
4	According to the passage, why could Lincoln oppose slavery's spread while also seeking to preserve the Union?	**He believed Republicans could stand against expansion through constitutional debate without accepting threats to end the Union.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In his 1860 Cooper Union Address, Lincoln argued that slavery was wrong. He supported stopping its expansion into western territories, but he did not demand that the federal government end it at once in states where it was legal. He also rejected threats to break up the United States over the dispute. Lincoln urged Republicans to hold to their position without giving up on the Union.

Accept wording that distinguishes opposition to slavery's expansion from immediate federal abolition in states. Responses should also identify Lincoln's rejection of threats to break up the Union.