A Nation Divided

Read how the Constitution left slavery unsettled.

8.C.3.2.D "Explain how the Three-Fifths Compromise over congressional representation and the Fugitive Slave Clause avoided the slavery issue and maintained the institution in both northern and southern states by permitting each state to maintain..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the three choices states kept about slavery. Underline each of the three national provisions, then write 1, 2, or 3 beside a sentence showing how each provision allowed slavery to continue.

The Decisions of 1787

1. In 1787, delegates meeting in Philadelphia had to design a national government while states disagreed about slavery. Some northern states had begun gradual abolition, while slavery remained central to the economies of many southern states. A rule ending slavery everywhere could have broken the convention apart. Instead, the Constitution left states room to keep slavery, limit it, or end it within their borders. That choice did not settle whether enslaving people was right. It let states with opposing laws join the same nation while slavery continued.

2. One argument concerned seats in the House of Representatives. Delegates from states with slavery wanted enslaved people counted when seats were divided, although those people could not vote. Other delegates objected to giving slaveholding states more power for people they denied rights. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three of every five enslaved people for representation and direct taxes. This gave slaveholding states more House seats than counting only free people would have, but fewer than counting everyone. Rather than decide slavery's future, the delegates settled a power struggle around it.

3. The Fugitive Slave Clause added another protection: if an enslaved person escaped to a state that had ended slavery, that state's laws did not make the person free under the Constitution. The person could be claimed and returned, so slavery still had reach across state borders. Delegates also barred Congress from ending the importation of enslaved people from abroad before 1808. Congress later banned that importation, not slavery itself. Together, these choices avoided a national decision about abolition while allowing slavery to survive alongside states that restricted or abolished it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did letting each state make its own slavery laws help delegates avoid a national decision about slavery?

2. How did the Three-Fifths Compromise give slaveholding states political power without settling slavery's future?

3. Why could a state that had ended slavery not guarantee freedom to an enslaved person who escaped there?

4. Why did the rule about importation delay action against slavery without requiring any state to end it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum label for a visitor who thinks a state ending slavery meant slavery was ending everywhere. Correct that idea using the choices states kept and all three national provisions, and explain why the later import ban did not end slavery.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.3.2.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the three choices states kept about slavery. Underline each of the three national provisions, then write 1, 2, or 3 beside a sentence showing how each provision allowed slavery to continue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did letting each state make its own slavery laws help delegates avoid a national decision about slavery?	**States could keep, limit, or end slavery within their borders, so delegates did not have to agree on one rule for the whole country.**
2	How did the Three-Fifths Compromise give slaveholding states political power without settling slavery's future?	**Counting three of every five enslaved people gave slaveholding states more House seats than counting only free people would have, while leaving slavery in place.**
3	Why could a state that had ended slavery not guarantee freedom to an enslaved person who escaped there?	**The Fugitive Slave Clause allowed the person to be claimed and returned despite that state's laws.**
4	Why did the rule about importation delay action against slavery without requiring any state to end it?	**Congress could not ban the importation of enslaved people from abroad before 1808. The later import ban did not ban slavery itself.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A state could end slavery inside its borders without making that choice for the whole country. Under the Three-Fifths Compromise, counting enslaved people for House seats increased the political power of states that kept slavery, even though enslaved people could not vote. The Fugitive Slave Clause let enslavers claim people who escaped into states that had ended slavery, so crossing a border did not guarantee freedom. Congress could not ban the overseas importation of enslaved people before 1808. Banning that importation later did not free people already enslaved or end slavery in any state.

Accept wording that explains how each provision allowed slavery to continue while states kept different laws. Distinguish the 1808 limit on banning importation from a ban on slavery itself.