Freedom Under Scrutiny

Compare a speech, a later summary, and a federal law.

OKH.P.3.1.A "Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date, and origin of information."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each source's creator and date, underline a phrase you could use as evidence, and box words that tell where the information came from.

What Did Freedom Mean in 1852?

1. Source A comes from a speech delivered by Frederick Douglass, a formerly enslaved abolitionist, in Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852. His audience had invited him to speak at an Independence Day event. Douglass asked, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" He went on to argue that the holiday exposed a painful gap between the nation's ideals and the reality of slavery. These words came from a public address, not a private journal. Douglass spoke while slavery remained legal in much of the United States, and he wanted his listeners to confront that contradiction.

2. Source B is a 2026 summary written by this worksheet's author after reading Douglass's speech and the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. It states: "The holiday's promises of liberty stood beside a federal system that protected slavery. The Fugitive Slave Act required officials to help return people claimed as escaped slaves, even if those people were found in a free state." This summary connects a public speech to a federal law. It does not report what every enslaved person thought or felt in 1852. Written long after the events, it relies on older records rather than firsthand observation.

3. Source C is a passage from the Fugitive Slave Act, passed by the United States Congress in 1850. It says that "all good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required." The law also allowed a person claiming that someone had escaped slavery to request help from federal authorities. This text records what lawmakers ordered, not whether every citizen obeyed. Its legal language addresses enforcement, while Douglass's speech addresses the meaning of a national celebration. Both documents were created before slavery ended in the United States in 1865.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What criticism of the Independence Day celebration can you support with Douglass's words in Source A? Include his question and explain why the speaker and date matter.

2. Why is Source B a secondary source rather than a firsthand account? Cite words from the passage that show where its information came from.

3. What did Congress direct people to do under the 1850 law? Cite the command in Source C and identify who issued it.

4. Which source, B or C, is stronger evidence for the exact words of the 1850 law? Cite a phrase from each source and explain how their origins differ.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum proposes this caption: “All Americans shared equal freedom on Independence Day in 1852.” Write a four-sentence replacement that challenges this claim with a quotation or exact phrase from both Source A and Source C, and explains what each source's origin helps it show.

ANSWER KEY

Freedom Under Scrutiny

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.P.3.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each source's creator and date, underline a phrase you could use as evidence, and box words that tell where the information came from. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What criticism of the Independence Day celebration can you support with Douglass's words in Source A? Include his question and explain why the speaker and date matter.	**Douglass asked, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" As a formerly enslaved abolitionist speaking in 1852, while slavery was legal, he challenged a celebration of freedom that did not include enslaved people.**
2	Why is Source B a secondary source rather than a firsthand account? Cite words from the passage that show where its information came from.	**The 2026 summary was written after the events and "after reading Douglass's speech and the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850." Its author relies on those older records.**
3	What did Congress direct people to do under the 1850 law? Cite the command in Source C and identify who issued it.	**The United States Congress ordered that "all good citizens" aid in the law's "prompt and efficient execution" when required.**
4	Which source, B or C, is stronger evidence for the exact words of the 1850 law? Cite a phrase from each source and explain how their origins differ.	**Source C is stronger for the law's exact words because it quotes Congress's 1850 command, "all good citizens are hereby commanded." Source B is a 2026 summary that says the law "required officials to help return" people; those are the later writer's words.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A museum caption should not claim that all Americans shared equal freedom on Independence Day in 1852. In his 1852 public speech, Frederick Douglass asked, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" His words show how an abolitionist challenged the celebration's promise of liberty. The 1850 law passed by Congress commanded "all good citizens" to aid its enforcement, showing what the federal government ordered rather than how every citizen acted.

Accept accurate excerpts shorter than those in the key. Students should distinguish what a speech, a later summary, and a law can establish without treating any one source as evidence of what everyone thought or did.