

A Decision That Divided

Evaluate how one Supreme Court ruling changed conflict over slavery.

8.18.C "evaluate the impact of the landmark Supreme Court decision Dred Scott v. Sandford on life in the United States."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three statements that describe an effect of the Dred Scott decision, and circle the names of groups affected by it. These marks will help you evaluate how the ruling changed life in the United States.

Dred Scott and a Nation in Conflict

- ① In March 1857, the Supreme Court decided Dred Scott v. Sandford. Dred Scott was an enslaved man who had lived with his enslaver in free Illinois and the Wisconsin Territory, where Congress had banned slavery. Scott argued that living on free soil made him free. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote the Court's majority opinion. The Court ruled that Black people, whether enslaved or free, could not be citizens of the United States. Therefore, Scott could not bring his case in federal court as a citizen.
- ② The Court also ruled that Congress could not prohibit slavery in U.S. territories. It said enslaved people were property protected by the Constitution, so the Missouri Compromise's limit on slavery was unconstitutional. This ruling gave slaveholders a stronger legal argument for taking slavery into western territories. Many white Southerners welcomed the decision because they believed it protected their property rights. Many Northerners were angered because they feared slavery could spread and because the Court had removed a compromise Congress had made.
- ③ For free Black Americans, the decision was a direct warning that the nation's highest court denied their citizenship. Enslaved people saw that residence in a free area did not automatically secure freedom. The ruling deepened distrust between North and South and made compromise over slavery harder. It also energized opponents of slavery's expansion, including the new Republican Party. The decision did not cause the Civil War by itself, but it intensified the conflict over slavery that led to war. After the war, the Fourteenth Amendment rejected the Court's citizenship ruling.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did the Court rule about Black citizenship, and how did that ruling affect Dred Scott's case?

2 How did the ruling about slavery in U.S. territories strengthen the position of slaveholders?

3 Compare one impact of the decision on free Black Americans with one impact on many Northerners.

4 Which two effects from the passage support the claim that the decision increased sectional conflict?
Explain how they support the claim.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence newspaper editorial that evaluates whether the Dred Scott decision increased or reduced conflict in the United States. Use at least two details from the passage, including one effect on Black Americans and one effect on political or sectional conflict.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three statements that describe an effect of the Dred Scott decision, and circle the names of groups affected by it. These marks will help you evaluate how the ruling changed life in the United States. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did the Court rule about Black citizenship, and how did that ruling affect Dred Scott's case?	The Court ruled that Black people could not be U.S. citizens. It said Scott could not bring his case in federal court as a citizen.
2	How did the ruling about slavery in U.S. territories strengthen the position of slaveholders?	It said Congress could not ban slavery in territories and struck down the Missouri Compromise limit. Slaveholders gained a stronger legal argument to take slavery west.
3	Compare one impact of the decision on free Black Americans with one impact on many Northerners.	Free Black Americans were denied citizenship by the nation's highest court. Many Northerners were angered because they feared slavery would spread and Congress's compromise had been removed.
4	Which two effects from the passage support the claim that the decision increased sectional conflict? Explain how they support the claim.	Accept any two accurate effects, such as deeper distrust between North and South, harder compromise over slavery, Northern anger, Southern support, or energy for opponents of slavery's expansion. The explanation should connect the effects to greater conflict between regions.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Dred Scott decision increased conflict instead of reducing it. Its denial of citizenship to free Black Americans showed that the nation's highest court refused to protect their rights. By striking down the Missouri Compromise limit, the Court gave slaveholders a stronger argument to expand slavery into the territories. This angered many Northerners and made compromise between North and South harder.

Accept evaluations that clearly claim the ruling increased conflict and support that claim with accurate passage evidence. Students may use different relevant effects, but they must address both Black Americans and political or sectional conflict.