

Across State Lines

Trace how a federal law shaped lives and conflict.

8.5.B "explain the effects of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two sentences that describe powers or penalties in the law, circle three effects or responses, and number the effects 1 through 3 to trace how the law changed people's lives and communities.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793

- ① In 1793, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act to enforce a part of the Constitution about people "held to service or labor" who escaped to another state. The law gave an enslaver, or the enslaver's agent, a federal process for pursuing an alleged fugitive across state lines. A claimant could seize the person and bring that person before a federal judge or a local magistrate. If the claimant offered satisfactory proof, the official issued a certificate allowing the person's removal to the state from which they had fled.
- ② The act also made a person who knowingly blocked a claimant, rescued a person, or hid someone known to have escaped liable to pay \$500 to the claimant. This was a very large sum at the time. These rules increased the power of slaveholders and made freedom less secure for people who had fled slavery. The hearing did not require a jury trial or testimony from the accused person. Because officials could issue certificates after a brief proceeding, free Black people also faced danger of being seized and falsely claimed as fugitives.
- ③ Effects were felt beyond individual cases. Some Northern residents, including free Black communities and antislavery activists, organized aid networks and tried to protect people accused of escape. Several Northern states passed personal liberty laws that added state procedures or protections, though these measures often clashed with federal authority. The conflict showed that a person's status could be decided far from the place where that person lived. Resistance and legal disputes continued, and Congress passed a harsher Fugitive Slave Act in 1850.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the certificate process strengthen an enslaver's ability to recover a person who had fled?

2 Identify two parts of the hearing process that made an accused person vulnerable.

3 What effect did the \$500 penalty have on people who might have helped someone escape or resisted a claimant?

4 What actions did Northern residents and states take in response to the act, and what conflict did those actions reveal?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences that explain a chain of effects caused by the act. Include one power given by the federal law, one Northern response, and an explanation of how they created conflict.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two sentences that describe powers or penalties in the law, circle three effects or responses, and number the effects 1 through 3 to trace how the law changed people's lives and communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the certificate process strengthen an enslaver's ability to recover a person who had fled?	After offering satisfactory proof to a judge or magistrate, a claimant could receive a certificate authorizing the person's removal to the state they had fled from.
2	Identify two parts of the hearing process that made an accused person vulnerable.	The hearing did not require a jury trial or testimony from the accused person, and officials could issue certificates after a brief proceeding.
3	What effect did the \$500 penalty have on people who might have helped someone escape or resisted a claimant?	It discouraged people from blocking claimants, rescuing accused fugitives, or hiding people who had escaped because \$500 was a very large sum.
4	What actions did Northern residents and states take in response to the act, and what conflict did those actions reveal?	Residents organized aid networks and tried to protect accused people, while several states passed personal liberty laws. These actions revealed a conflict between state protections and federal authority.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The act allowed a claimant to seek a certificate that authorized removal of an alleged fugitive. This federal power threatened people accused of escape and led some Northern states to pass personal liberty laws. Those laws created conflict because state protections could limit or challenge the federal process.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a federal power in the act to an effect on accused people or communities and then to Northern resistance or state action. For the open response, all three required elements must be present in exactly three sentences.