

Counting Political Power

Read how a constitutional compromise shaped representation.

USI.7.d "explaining the Three-Fifths Compromise; and"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the Three-Fifths Compromise. Circle two phrases that show how the compromise affected political power.

A Compromise About Counting

- ① During the Constitutional Convention in 1787, delegates had to decide how states would be counted in the new national government. Seats in the House of Representatives would depend on population. Southern states wanted enslaved people included when counting population. Many Northern delegates objected because enslaved people had no political rights and could not vote under state law.
- ② Delegates reached the Three-Fifths Compromise. For purposes of representation and direct taxes, every five enslaved people would be counted as three people. This rule did not mean that any person was actually three-fifths of a person. It was a political agreement about population totals used by the federal government under the Constitution when laws were made.
- ③ Because the compromise added part of the enslaved population to a state's count, Southern states received more representatives than they would have received if only free people had been counted. More representatives could give those states more influence in the House and in presidential elections, since each state's electoral votes partly depend on its members of Congress. The compromise protected slavery's political power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What government decision made population counts important to the delegates?

2 Why did many Northern delegates object to counting enslaved people for representation?

3 Explain the counting rule in the Three-Fifths Compromise.

4 How did the compromise increase the influence of Southern states?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Imagine a state has 50,000 free people and 10,000 enslaved people. Write exactly three sentences explaining its population total under the Three-Fifths Compromise, how that total differs if only free people are counted, and one political effect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the Three-Fifths Compromise. Circle two phrases that show how the compromise affected political power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What government decision made population counts important to the delegates?	Population would determine seats in the House of Representatives.
2	Why did many Northern delegates object to counting enslaved people for representation?	They objected because enslaved people had no political rights and could not vote under state law.
3	Explain the counting rule in the Three-Fifths Compromise.	For representation and direct taxes, every five enslaved people were counted as three people.
4	How did the compromise increase the influence of Southern states?	It gave Southern states more representatives than if only free people had been counted. More representatives could also increase their influence in presidential elections.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

State A would count 50,000 free people plus 6,000 of its 10,000 enslaved people, for a total of 56,000. If only free people were counted, its total would be 50,000. The compromise could give State A more representation and political influence, even though enslaved people could not vote.

Accept equivalent explanations that state the five-to-three counting rule and connect the larger count to increased representation or political influence. For the open response, require the correct total of 56,000 and a clear comparison to 50,000.