

# The Movement to End Slavery

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Americans from a variety of backgrounds actively opposed slavery.
2. Abolitionists organized the Underground Railroad to help enslaved Africans escape.
3. Despite efforts of abolitionists, many Americans remained opposed to ending slavery.

### The Big Idea

In the mid-1800s, debate over slavery increased as abolitionists organized to challenge slavery in the United States.

### Key Terms and People

abolition, p. 454

William Lloyd Garrison, p. 455

American Anti-Slavery Society, p. 455

Angelina and Sarah Grimké, p. 455

Frederick Douglass, p. 456

Sojourner Truth, p. 456

Underground Railroad, p. 456

Harriet Tubman, p. 458

### TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on the different abolitionist movements that existed, the leaders of each movement, and the methods used by each group to oppose slavery. Write your notes in a chart like the one below.

Movement	Members	Methods

## If YOU were there...

You live in southern Ohio in the 1850s. A friend who lives across the river in Kentucky has asked you to join a network that helps escaping slaves. She reminds you that your house has a secret cellar where you could easily hide fugitives for a few days. You are opposed to slavery. But you know this might get you in trouble with your neighbors—and with the law.

**Would you become an agent for the Underground Railroad? Why?**

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** The early 1800s brought many movements for social reform in the United States. Perhaps the most important and far-reaching was the movement for the abolition of slavery. While reformers worked to end slavery, many also took risks to help slaves to escape.

## Americans Oppose Slavery

Some Americans had opposed slavery since before the country was founded. Benjamin Franklin was the president of the first anti-slavery society in America, the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. In the 1830s, Americans took more organized action supporting **abolition**, or a **complete end to slavery**.

### Differences among Abolitionists

Abolitionists came from many different backgrounds and opposed slavery for various reasons. The Quakers were among the first groups to challenge slavery on religious grounds. Other religious leaders gave speeches and published pamphlets that moved many Americans to support abolition. In one of these, abolitionist Theodore Weld wrote that “everyman knows that slavery is a curse.” Other abolitionists referred to the Declaration of Independence. They reminded people that the American Revolution had been fought in the name of liberty.

Antislavery reformers did not always agree on the details, however. They differed over how much equality they thought African Americans should have. Some believed that African Americans should receive the same treatment as white Americans. In contrast, other abolitionists were against full political and social equality.

Some abolitionists wanted to send freed African Americans to Africa to start new colonies. They thought that this would prevent conflicts between the races in the United States. In 1817 a minister named Robert Finley started the American Colonization Society, an organization dedicated to establishing colonies of freed slaves in Africa. Five years later, the society founded the colony of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. About 12,000 African Americans eventually settled in Liberia. However, many abolitionists who once favored colonization later opposed it. Some African Americans also opposed it. David Walker was one such person. In his 1829 essay, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, Walker explained his opposition to colonization.

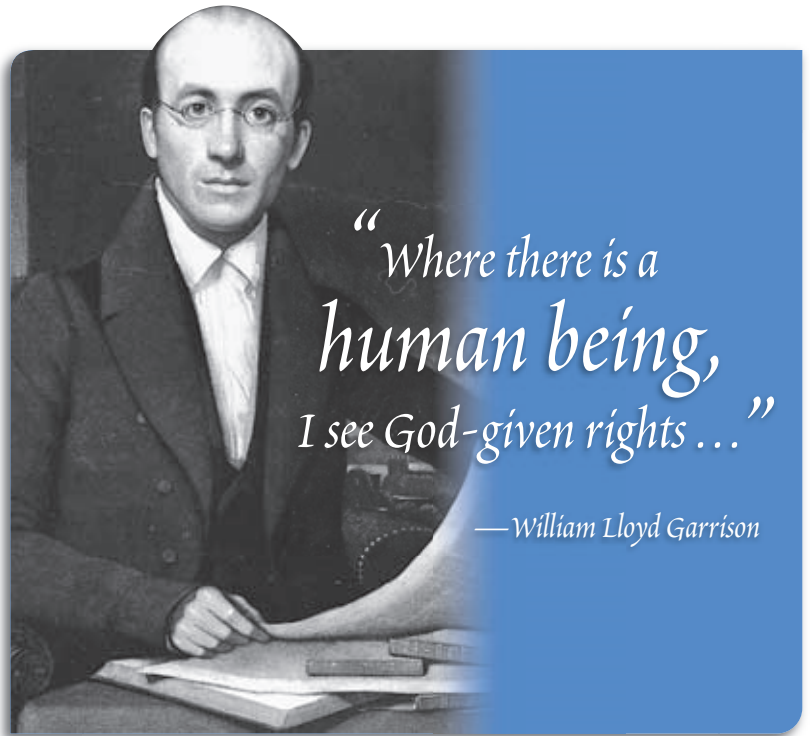
“The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears: and they [whites] will drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood.”

—David Walker, quoted in *From Slavery to Freedom*  
by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr.

### Spreading the Abolitionist Message

Abolitionists found many ways to further their cause. Some went on speaking tours or wrote pamphlets and newspaper articles. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote abolitionist poetry and literature. **William Lloyd Garrison** published an abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator*, beginning in 1831. In 1833 he also helped found the **American Anti-Slavery Society**. **Its members wanted immediate emancipation and racial equality for African Americans.** Garrison later became its president.

Both the *Liberator* and the Anti-Slavery Society relied on support from free African Americans. Society members spread



antislavery literature and petitioned Congress to end federal support of slavery. In 1840 the American Anti-Slavery Society split. One group wanted immediate freedom for enslaved African Americans and a bigger role for women. The others wanted gradual emancipation and for women to play only minor roles in the movement.

**Angelina and Sarah Grimké**, two white southern women, were antislavery activists of the 1830s. They came from a South Carolina slaveholding family but disagreed with their parents' support of slavery. Angelina Grimké tried to recruit other white southern women in a pamphlet called *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* in 1836.

“I know you do not make the laws, but ... if you really suppose you can do nothing to overthrow slavery you are greatly mistaken ... Try to persuade your husband, father, brothers, and sons that slavery is a crime against God and man.”

—Angelina Grimké, quoted in *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, edited by Gerda Lerner

This essay was very popular in the North. In 1839 the Grimké sisters wrote *American Slavery As It Is*. The book was one of the most important antislavery works of its time.

## African American Abolitionists

Many former slaves were active in the anti-slavery cause. **Frederick Douglass** escaped from slavery when he was 20 and went on to become one of the most important African American leaders of the 1800s. Douglass secretly learned to read and write as a boy, despite a law against it. His public-speaking skills impressed members of the Anti-Slavery Society. In 1841 they asked him to give regular lectures.

At a Fourth of July celebration in 1852, he captured the audience's attention with his powerful voice.

“The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common ... This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn.”

—Frederick Douglass, quoted in *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr.

In addition to his many speaking tours in the United States and Europe, Douglass published a newspaper called the *North Star* and wrote several autobiographies. His autobiographies were intended to show the injustices of slavery.

Another former slave, **Sojourner Truth**, also contributed to the abolitionist cause. She claimed God had called her to travel through the United States and preach the truth about slavery and women's rights. With her deep voice and quick wit, Truth became legendary in the antislavery movement for her fiery and dramatic speeches.

Other African Americans wrote narratives about their experiences as slaves to expose the cruelties that many slaves faced. In 1861 Harriet Jacobs published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, one of the few slave narratives by a woman. William Wells Brown wrote an anti-slavery play as well as a personal narrative in the form of a novel called *Clotel*.

**READING CHECK** **Finding Main Ideas** In what ways did African Americans participate in the abolition movement?

## The Underground Railroad

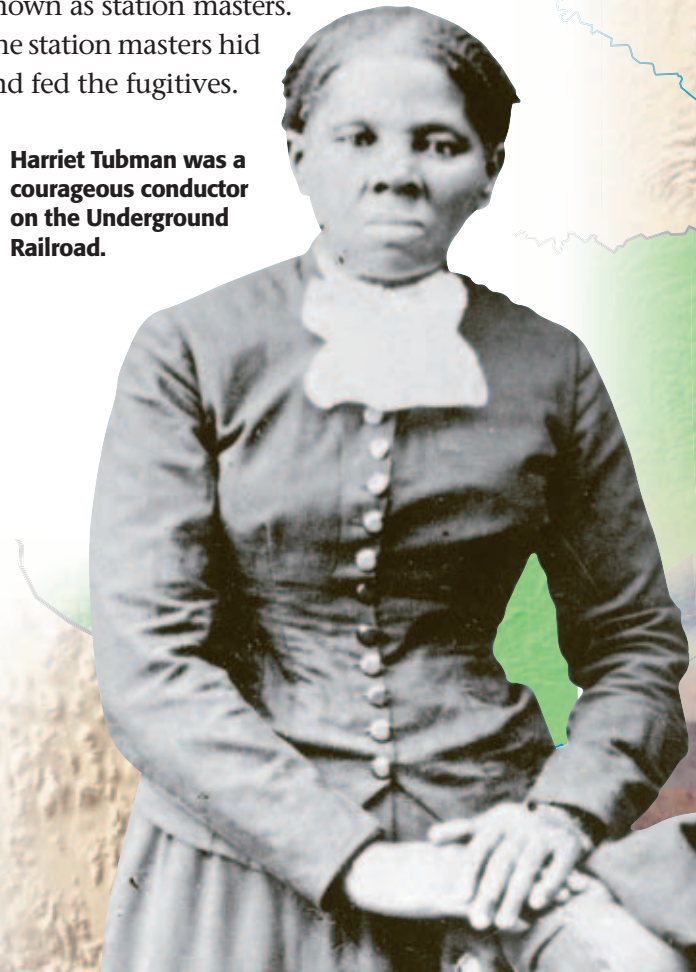
By the 1830s, a loosely organized group had begun helping slaves escape from the South. Free African Americans, former slaves, and a few white abolitionists worked together. They created what became known as the **Underground Railroad**. The organization was not an actual railroad but was a network of people who arranged transportation and hiding places for fugitives, or escaped slaves.

Fugitives would travel along “freedom trails” that led them to northern states or sometimes into Canada. At no time did the Railroad have a central leadership. No one person, or group of people, was ever officially in charge. Despite the lack of any real structure, the Underground Railroad managed to achieve dramatic results.

Often wearing disguises, fugitives moved along the “railroad” at night, led by people known as conductors. Many times, the fugitives had no other guideposts but the stars. They stopped to rest during the day at “stations,” often barns, attics, or other places on property owned by abolitionists known as station masters.

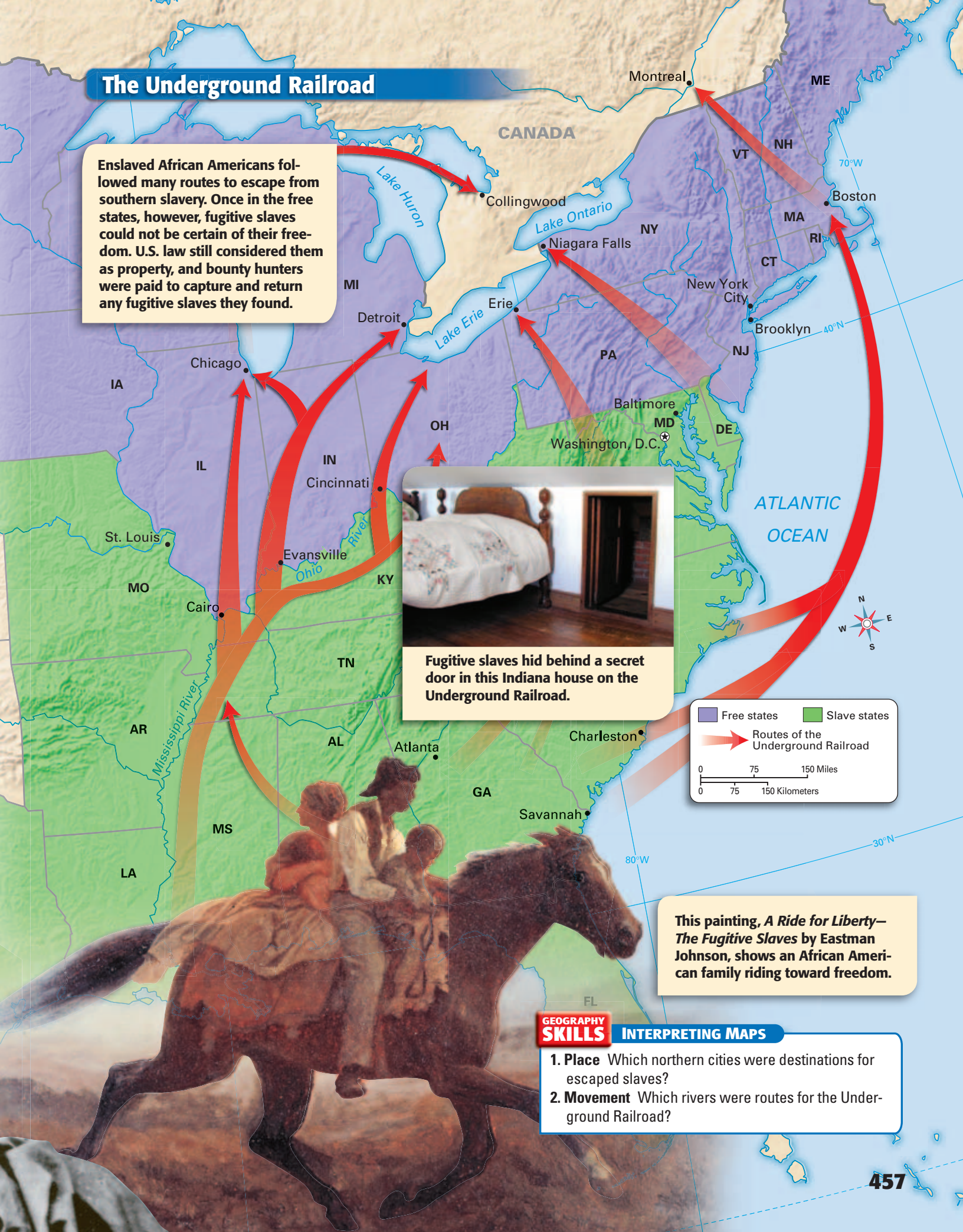
The station masters hid and fed the fugitives.

**Harriet Tubman was a courageous conductor on the Underground Railroad.**



# The Underground Railroad

Enslaved African Americans followed many routes to escape from southern slavery. Once in the free states, however, fugitive slaves could not be certain of their freedom. U.S. law still considered them as property, and bounty hunters were paid to capture and return any fugitive slaves they found.



Fugitive slaves hid behind a secret door in this Indiana house on the Underground Railroad.

Free states
  Slave states

Routes of the Underground Railroad

0 75 150 Miles  
 0 75 150 Kilometers



This painting, *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* by Eastman Johnson, shows an African American family riding toward freedom.

## GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

1. **Place** Which northern cities were destinations for escaped slaves?
2. **Movement** Which rivers were routes for the Underground Railroad?

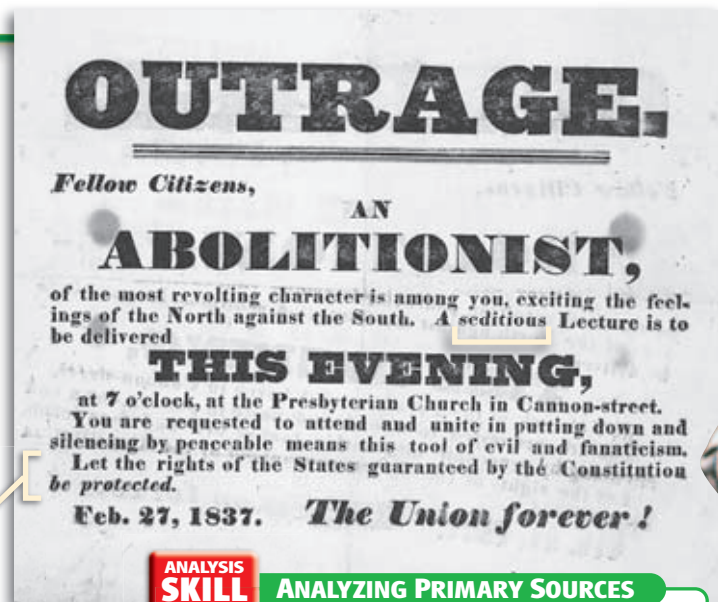
## Primary Source

### HANDBILL Anti-Abolitionist Rally

Members of an anti-abolitionist group used this flyer to call people together in order to disrupt a meeting of abolitionists in 1837.

*Seditious* means “guilty of rebelling against lawful authority.”

The group believes abolition violates the Constitution.



What emotional language does this handbill use to get its message across?

The most famous and daring conductor on the Underground Railroad was **Harriet Tubman**. When Tubman escaped slavery in 1849, she left behind her family. She swore that she would return and lead her whole family to freedom in the North. Tubman returned to the South 19 times, successfully leading her family and more than 300 other slaves to freedom. At one time the reward for Tubman's capture reportedly climbed to \$40,000, a huge amount of money at that time.

### READING CHECK Drawing Inferences

Why were the operations of the Underground Railroad kept secret?

## Opposition to Ending Slavery

Although the North was the center of the abolitionist movement, many white northerners agreed with the South and supported slavery. Others disliked slavery but opposed equality for African Americans.

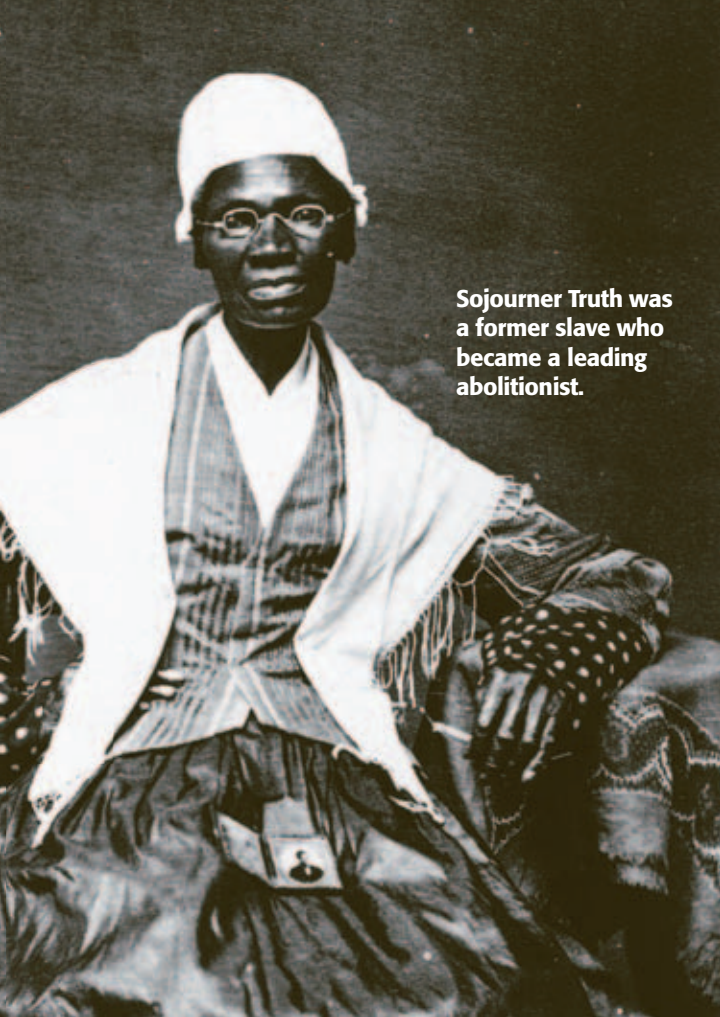
Newspaper editors and politicians warned that freed slaves would move north and take jobs from white workers. Some workers feared

losing jobs to newly freed African Americans, whom they believed would accept lower wages. Abolitionist leaders were threatened with violence as some northerners joined mobs. Such a mob killed abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy in 1837 in Alton, Illinois.

The federal government also obstructed abolitionists. Between 1836 and 1844, the U.S. House of Representatives used what was called a gag rule. Congress had received thousands of antislavery petitions. Yet the gag rule forbade members of Congress from discussing them. This rule violated the First Amendment right of citizens to petition the government. But southern members of Congress did not want to debate slavery. Many northern members of Congress preferred to avoid the issue.

Eventually, representative and former president John Quincy Adams was able to get the gag rule overturned. His resolution to enact a constitutional amendment halting the expansion of slavery never passed, however.

Many white southerners saw slavery as vital to the South's economy and culture. They also felt that outsiders should not



Sojourner Truth was a former slave who became a leading abolitionist.

interfere with their way of life. After Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831, when Turner led some slaves to kill slaveholders, open talk about slavery disappeared in the South. It became dangerous to voice antislavery sentiments in southern states. Abolitionists like the Grimké sisters left rather than air unpopular views to hostile neighbors. Racism, fear, and economic dependence on slavery made emancipation all but impossible in the South.

#### READING CHECK Drawing Conclusions

Why did many northern workers oppose the abolition movement?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The issue of slavery grew more controversial in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the next section you will learn about women's rights.

## Section 4 Assessment

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**Online Quiz**

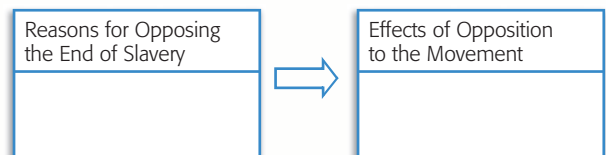
KEYWORD: SC7 HP14

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** What contributions did **William Lloyd Garrison** make to the **abolition** movement?
  - Draw Conclusions** In what ways did contributions from African Americans aid the struggle for abolition?
  - Elaborate** What do you think about the American Colonization Society's plan to return free African Americans to Liberia?
- Describe** How did the **Underground Railroad** work?
  - Explain** Why did **Harriet Tubman** first become involved with the Underground Railroad?
  - Evaluate** Do you think the Underground Railroad was a success? Why or why not?
- Describe** What action did Congress take to block abolitionists?
  - Analyze** Why did some Americans oppose equality for African Americans?
  - Predict** How might the debate over slavery lead to conflict in the future?

### Critical Thinking

- Identifying Cause and Effect** Review your notes on the abolitionist movement. Then use a graphic organizer like the one below to show the reasons for opposition to the movement and the effects of that opposition.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Describing Abolition** Add notes about the abolitionist movement and its leaders to your chart. Be sure to note how abolitionists influenced life in the United States. What were they fighting for? Who opposed them, and why?