

Slavery In The Constitution Answer Key

Name: _____

Constitution in Letters

The U.S. Constitution was once called a Bundle of Compromises. Complete the crossword about the highest law in the United States.

1. It serves as the overview of the Constitution.

2. He is called the Father of the Constitution.

3. Number of Articles in the Constitution.

4. A form of government which shares power between the national and state.

5. This state was misspelled in the original Constitution.

6. Number of the original states that participated in the actual writing of the Constitution.

7. The oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention.

8. Number of Amendments in the Bill of Rights.

Slavery in the Constitution Answer Key: The U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1787, is a foundational document that established the framework of the American government. However, it is also a document that reflects the complex and often troubling history of slavery in the United States. Examining the Constitution reveals how the institution of slavery was ingrained in the nation's legal and political systems, despite the founding ideals of liberty and equality. This article will explore the various aspects of slavery as addressed in the Constitution, the compromises that were made, and the long-term implications for American society.

Historical Context of Slavery in America

The history of slavery in America predates the Constitution itself. European colonists began enslaving

Africans in the early 17th century. By the time the Constitution was being drafted, slavery was a deeply entrenched institution, particularly in the Southern states.

1. The Economic Factors

- The Southern economy was heavily reliant on agriculture, particularly cotton, tobacco, and sugar.
- Enslaved labor was crucial for the profitability of these cash crops.
- The wealth generated from slavery contributed significantly to the overall economy of the United States.

2. The Social Factors

- Slavery created a rigid social hierarchy, with white landowners at the top and enslaved Africans at the bottom.
- Racial ideologies were developed to justify the enslavement of African people, promoting the idea of white superiority and black inferiority.

Slavery in the Constitution

The Constitution itself contains several references and clauses that pertain to slavery, reflecting the compromises made between Northern and Southern states.

1. The Three-Fifths Compromise

- The Three-Fifths Compromise (Article I, Section 2, Clause 3) was a pivotal agreement that addressed how enslaved individuals would be counted for representation and taxation.
- It stipulates that for every five enslaved persons, three would be counted towards the population total for congressional representation.
- This compromise was essential for Southern states, as it increased their representation in Congress while also ensuring that enslaved individuals were not granted any rights or freedoms.

2. The Slave Trade and the Constitution

- Article I, Section 9, Clause 1 gives Congress the power to prohibit the importation of slaves after 1808. This reflects a compromise that allowed the continuation of the slave trade for two decades after the Constitution was ratified.
- The decision to allow the importation of slaves until 1808 was a concession to Southern states, which relied on the trade for maintaining their labor force.

3. Fugitive Slave Clause

- The Fugitive Slave Clause (Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3) mandated that escaped enslaved people, if found in a free state, must be returned to their enslavers.
- This clause reinforced the property rights of slaveholders and created a legal obligation for Northern states to assist in the capture and return of escaped enslaved individuals.

Compromises and Conflicts

The inclusion of slavery-related clauses in the Constitution was crucial for securing the cooperation of Southern states during the ratification process. However, these compromises would sow the seeds of conflict that would eventually lead to the Civil War.

1. The Missouri Compromise

- In 1820, the Missouri Compromise was enacted to maintain the balance of power between free and slave states as new territories were added.
- Missouri was admitted as a slave state, while Maine was admitted as a free state, maintaining an equal number of each.
- This compromise also established the 36°30' parallel as the line dividing free and slave territories, although it would not resolve tensions.

2. The Compromise of 1850

- The Compromise of 1850 attempted to address the status of territories acquired during the Mexican-American War.
- It included provisions for California to enter as a free state and strengthened the Fugitive Slave Act, further polarizing the nation and angering abolitionists.

3. The Kansas-Nebraska Act

- Passed in 1854, this act allowed territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery through the principle of popular sovereignty.
- It led to violent conflicts known as "Bleeding Kansas," as pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions clashed, illustrating the deep divisions over the issue of slavery.

Abolition and the Thirteenth Amendment

The tensions surrounding slavery would ultimately culminate in the Civil War, which fundamentally altered the trajectory of American society.

1. The Civil War and Emancipation

- As the Civil War progressed, the abolition of slavery became a key goal for the Union.
- President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 declared the freedom of all enslaved people in Confederate-held territory.

2. The Thirteenth Amendment

- Ratified in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment formally abolished slavery in the United States.
- The amendment states, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."
- This marked a significant shift in the legal status of enslaved individuals and reflected the changing attitudes towards race and human rights.

Legacy of Slavery in the Constitution

The legacy of slavery as embedded in the Constitution continues to impact American society in various ways.

1. Racial Inequality

- The compromises made during the drafting of the Constitution and subsequent legislation perpetuated a system of racial inequality that continued long after the abolition of slavery.
- Jim Crow laws, segregation, and ongoing discrimination are part of the historical legacy that can be traced back to these foundational compromises.

2. Ongoing Debates on Race and Rights

- The Constitution has been a living document, subject to interpretation and amendment. However, the foundational issues regarding race and equality still provoke intense debate.
- Movements for civil rights, social justice, and racial equality continue to confront the historical injustices rooted in the Constitution.

3. Modern Constitutional Interpretation

- Legal scholars and activists often revisit the historical context of the Constitution when discussing contemporary issues of race, justice, and equality.
- The understanding of how slavery was incorporated into the Constitution informs current discussions about constitutional rights and protections for marginalized communities.

Conclusion

The examination of slavery in the Constitution answer key reveals the complexities and contradictions inherent in the founding document of the United States. The compromises made surrounding slavery were not mere political maneuvers; they had profound implications for the development of American society. While the Constitution laid the groundwork for a new nation, it also embedded the institution of slavery within its framework, creating a legacy of inequality that would persist long after the formal abolition of slavery. Understanding this history is crucial for comprehending the ongoing struggles for justice and equality in America today.

Frequently Asked Questions

What clauses in the U.S. Constitution addressed slavery?

The U.S. Constitution includes several clauses related to slavery, notably the Three-Fifths Compromise (Article I, Section 2), the Fugitive Slave Clause (Article IV, Section 2), and the prohibition of Congress to ban the importation of slaves until 1808 (Article I, Section 9).

How did the Three-Fifths Compromise affect political representation?

The Three-Fifths Compromise allowed states to count three-fifths of their enslaved population for purposes of representation in Congress, which gave Southern states greater political power relative to their free population.

What was the significance of the Fugitive Slave Clause?

The Fugitive Slave Clause mandated that escaped enslaved individuals be returned to their owners, reinforcing the institution of slavery and creating a legal obligation for states to cooperate in the capture of runaway slaves.

When did the Constitution explicitly address the end of slavery?

The Constitution explicitly addressed the end of slavery with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States.

Why was the issue of slavery a contentious topic during the Constitutional Convention?

The issue of slavery was contentious during the Constitutional Convention because it divided Northern and Southern states, with conflicting economic interests and moral views, leading to compromises that would shape future political tensions.

What role did the Constitution play in the abolition

movement?

The Constitution played a dual role in the abolition movement; while it contained provisions that protected slavery, abolitionists argued that the principles of liberty and equality in the Constitution could be interpreted to support the end of slavery, leading to significant legal and political battles.

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Explore the complexities of slavery in the Constitution with our detailed answer key. Learn more about historical implications and legal contexts today!

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