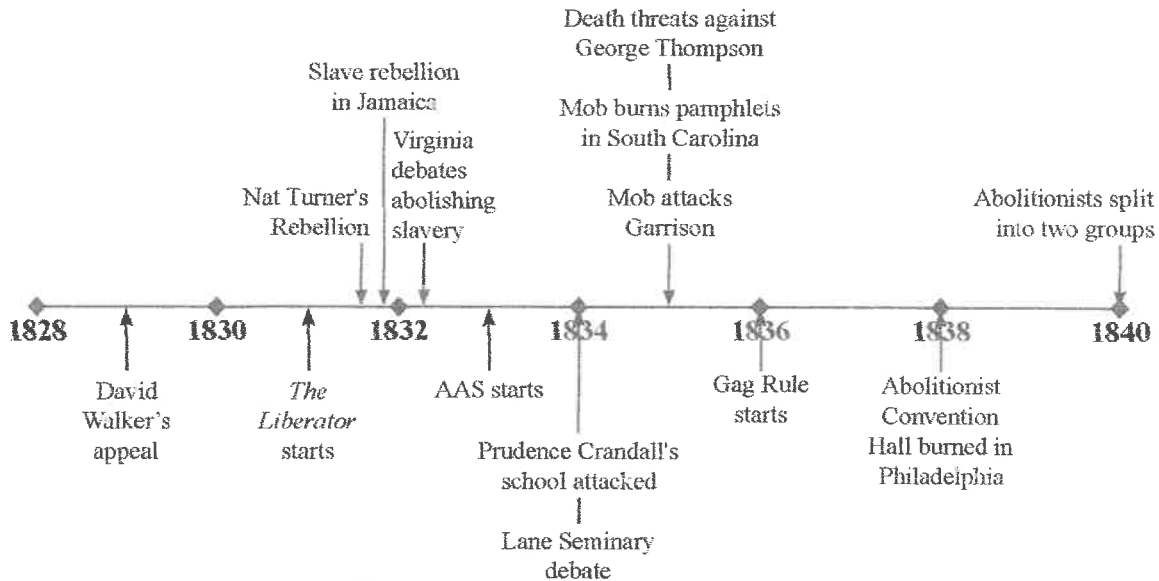


LESSON 5: ABOLITIONISM

Student Handout 3: Outcomes

KEY EVENTS IN ABOLITION HISTORY



PROBLEM 1—ABOLITIONIST PUBLIC POSITION ON SLAVERY

1. Many African American and white abolitionists supported Option A because they felt it was wrong to compensate owners for their immoral participation in slavery. Others wanted to compensate (Option B), and still others wanted to go more slowly (Option C). None of these positions were very popular. Eventually, the Republican Party organized behind the idea in Option D that they would only oppose the extension of slavery. The position expressed in Option D was much more effective at mobilizing voters. Northerners were much more inclined to stop the spread of slavery, which threatened free labor, than they were to fight slavery itself.
2. *Walker's Appeal* was a call for slave rebellion proposed by David Walker, a free African American. As predicted, when it spread to the South, it caused extreme outrage among slaveowners. However, it was also criticized widely in the North for being too radical.
3. The abolitionist movement was split over how radical it should be. William Lloyd Garrison and other white abolitionists, as well as many African American abolitionists, pushed for immediate abolition without compensation to slaveowners. They were seen by other abolitionists as fanatical for their unwillingness to compromise. James Birney argued that the radical abolitionists wanted to break the Union in order to abolish slavery. Birney argued that people like Garrison did not support American democracy; they wanted to destroy the American system to bring about true reform. The movement split into two groups: the American Anti-Slavery Society (Garrison) and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

4. Abolitionists were repeatedly subjected to violence, even in the North. For example, Prudence Crandall's school for African American girls was destroyed; a convention hall in Philadelphia where an antislavery meeting had been held was burned down; abolitionist speaker George Thompson received death threats; a mob in Charleston, South Carolina, took abolitionist pamphlets from the post office and burned them; and William Lloyd Garrison was almost killed by an angry mob. Elijah Lovejoy, an antislavery newspaper editor in Illinois, was killed by a mob as it tried to burn down his building. These mobs were composed of a variety of groups: whites afraid that free African Americans would mix into their communities; people involved in the colonization societies who resented attacks on their projects by Garrison and other more extreme abolitionists; and middle-class Americans who feared that the abolitionists would tear the country apart, ruining the economy along with it. Almost all the mobs were influenced or organized by the middle class.
5. Abolitionists, especially extreme abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, were disliked by both political parties. The Democratic Party was dependent on support from the South, so it consistently supported anti-abolitionist measures, such as the gag rule (a rule to prevent reading or discussing abolitionist petitions in Congress). The Whig Party was more favorable to curbing or abolishing slavery, but Whigs felt they were defending Northern rights and the Constitution, not extremists who wanted immediate abolition. They referred to abolitionists as "crackpots" and "fanatics."
6. The agitation by abolitionists and the resulting reactions by some slaveholders made it steadily more difficult to compromise over slavery. In that sense, abolitionism was a cause of the Civil War.



William Lloyd Garrison

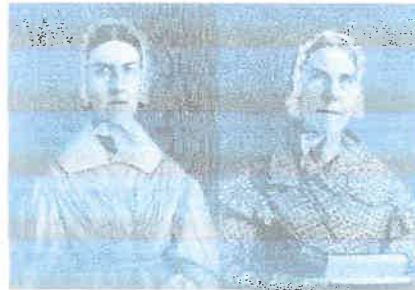
PROBLEM 2—PUBLIC POSITION ON AFRICAN AMERICANS AFTER SLAVERY

African American abolitionists (as well as some white abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison) wanted African Americans to receive equal treatment with whites after slavery ended, just as free African Americans should have received equal rights and respect at the time of slavery (Option A). But most white Americans, including many abolitionists, were not in favor of true equality for freed slaves. As mentioned, members of the American Colonization Society wanted freed slaves to go back to Africa (Option C). An example of this prejudice occurred when Prudence Crandall, a white schoolteacher, started a school in Connecticut for African American girls. The political leaders and white citizens in the town warned Crandall to close the school, saying that it made the entire town look bad. The school was repeatedly attacked and forced to close. Taking a principled stance in favor of equality for freed slaves brought great opposition from racist American society.

Slavery was abolished during the Civil War, but freedmen were not given equal rights. New forms of discrimination appeared during the Reconstruction period, such as “black codes” and Jim Crow laws (segregation laws). Some forms of discrimination were eliminated during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, but racism still lingers in America.

PROBLEM 3—ABOLITIONIST STRATEGIES

1. The abolitionists used a number of strategies, including Options B (speeches in the North), D (forming a political party), F (distributing pamphlets), G (novels), H (petitions), and I (equal rights for women). A few abolitionists helped fund a slave revolt (Option M) when they supported John Brown in 1859. There were few, if any, boycotts (Option E), violent protests (Option L) or protests against companies (Option A). And there were few volunteers willing to give abolitionist speeches in the South (Option C).
2. In 1831, William Lloyd Garrison started *The Liberator*, a newspaper that published antislavery materials for decades without interruption (Option F). The newspaper had a major effect on abolition in the U.S. In the first issue, Garrison stated, “I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice [about slavery]. On this subject I do not wish to think or speak, or write, with moderation.”
3. Angelina and Sarah Grimke published samples from Southern newspapers on runaway slaves, which revealed the great brutality of slavery (also Option F). For example, “Ten dollars reward for my woman Siby, very much scarred about the neck and ears by whipping,” and “One hundred dollars reward for a negro fellow Pompey, 40 years old, he is branded on the left jaw.” Due to improvements in transportation and the start of a pamphlet distribution service called the American Tract (Pamphlet) Society, the abolitionists were able to reach a larger number of people and educate them with their literature.
4. Congress passed a gag rule that antislavery petitions (Option H) would not be printed or debated, but ignored. This decision led to decades of agitation to reinstate the right of petition, including 400,000 petitions with nearly one million signatures protesting the gag rule.
5. Some abolitionists formed the Liberty Party (Option D), which received only about 1% of the vote in 1844 (although it may have helped decide the outcome of the election). These abolitionists felt that the best way to end slavery without violence was to work through the American political system. William Lloyd Garrison’s followers believed that a third party would corrupt the abolitionist movement because it would have to take positions on many issues and fight to get people elected. The party would have to make compromises in order to attract more voters and candidates with different views. Abolition, not election, was the true goal. Those opposed to a third party wanted to change the moral vision of voters, which would, in turn, change the political system.



Angelina and Sarah Grimke

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6. Some abolitionists felt that bringing about female equality within the abolitionist movement would unite the whole movement over the issue of equal rights (Option I). Others felt that women's rights would increase opposition (some men, rightly or wrongly, might change their minds and start to oppose abolition if women became involved in political matters), and distract the movement from its primary goal of abolition.
7. One of the most effective strategies came in the form of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which sold 300,000 copies and influenced public opinion in the North (Option G). Many Northerners who had no experience with slavery plantations formed their view from the novel.