7th Grade *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Inquiry

Can Words Lead to War?



Hammatt Billings, full-page illustration from Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* 1st ed. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852. Public Domain. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/illustra/52illf.html>.

Supporting Questions

1. How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*?
2. What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*?
3. How did Northerners and Southerners react to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*?
4. How did *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* affect abolitionism?

7th Grade *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Inquiry

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Can Words Lead to War? | | | | | | | | |
| New York State Social Studies Framework Key Ideas & Practices | 7.7 REFORM MOVEMENTS: Social, political, and economic inequalities sparked various reform movements and resistance efforts. Influenced by the Second Great Awakening, New York State played a key role in major reform efforts.  Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence Chronological Reasoning and Causation  Comparison and Contextualization | | | | | | | |
| Staging the Question | Consider the power of words and examine a video of students using words to try to bring about positive change. | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| Supporting Question 1 | | |  | Supporting Question 2 |  | Supporting Question 3 |  | Supporting Question 4 |
| How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? | | |  | What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? |  | How did people in the North and South react to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? |  | How did *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* affect abolitionism? |
| Formative Performance Task | | |  | Formative Performance Task |  | Formative Performance Task |  | Formative Performance Task |
| Write a summary of the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that includes main ideas and supporting details from Stowe’s description of slavery in the book. | | |  | List four quotes in the sources that point to Stowe’s motivation and write a paragraph explaining her motivation. |  | Make a T-chart comparing viewpoints expressed in newspaper reviews of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and make a claim about the differences. |  | Participate in a structured discussion regarding the impact *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had on abolitionism*.* |
| Featured Source | | |  | Featured Source |  | Featured Source |  | Featured Source |
| **Source A:** Summary of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  **Source B:** Excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  **Source C:** Illustrations from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* | | |  | **Source A:** Harriet Beecher Stowe’s concluding remarks to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.  **Source B:** Letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Lord Thomas Denman |  | **Source A:** Review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published in the *Boston Morning Post*  **Source B:** Review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published in the *Southern Press Review* |  | **Source A:** Excerpt from Charles Sumner’s Senate speech  **Source B:** Article by John Ball Jr. published in *The Liberator*  **Source C:** Sales of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1851–1853 |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| Summative Performance Task | | Argument Can words lead to war? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources, while acknowledging competing views. | | | | | | |
| Extension Create an educational video of the argument that responds to the compelling question “Can words lead to war?” | | | | | | |
| Taking  Informed  Action | | Understand Identify and describe a human rights issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., child labor, trafficking, or poverty).  Assess Create a list of possible actions that involve words. This may include letters, editorials, social media, videos, and protests.  Act Choose one of the options and implement it as an individual, small group, or class project. | | | | | | |

# Overview

## Inquiry Description

This inquiry provides students with an opportunity to explore how words affect public opinion through an examination of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Students will investigate historical sources related to the novel and reactions of people in the North and South in order to address the compelling question “Can words lead to war?” This query takes advantage of the mixed messages students often receive about the power of words. Students’ understanding about how words can make a difference is often grounded in discussions of words used to bully, instead of the power of words to encourage reform. The final summative assessment asks them to make an argument about the impact of the words in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

The inquiry opens with a staging activity related to the compelling question “Can words lead to war?” For this activity, students will consider the power of words in their home, school, community, nation, and world. The focus then shifts to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Stowe’s motivation for writing the book, as well as the reactions people in the North and South had to the words in the book.

The initial formative performance task is centered on the text of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Students will write a summary of the plot of the book and carefully analyze chosen excerpts and illustrations to better understand how Stowe described slavery and the emotional language she used to convey her message. The second task provides students with an opportunity to consider how the Fugitive Slave Act was one of the major factors that inspired Stowe to write her book. Students will examine Stowe’s motivation as described in her concluding remarks to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, along with a letter in which she describes what led her to write it. The third formative performance task shifts to an examination of reactions to book. Students will read two reviews, one supportive and the other critical, both written within a year of the publication. The fourth formative performance task deals with the book’s impact on abolitionism through an examination of two descriptions of that impact and a chart depicting the sales of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Stowe sought to bring attention to the enslavement of African Americans through her portrayal of such characters as Uncle Tom, Eliza, and George, but in doing so she also offered up stereotypical black characters that may have unintentionally reinforced racist sentiment at the time. Teachers should take great care in presenting the text of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as an artifact of its time.

The sources in this inquiry represent the views of slavery held by white Americans; equally important were the views of African Americans at the time. This inquiry is focused on the power of words, so teachers may select sources produced by African Americans from the antebellum period who sought the same goal as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. For example, teachers may use selections from Sojourner Truth’s 1850 memoir *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave* or Fredrick Douglass’s 1855 book *My Bondage, My Freedom*. Douglass provides a powerful voice from the African American perspective that supports teachers committed to culturally responsive practice.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take five to seven 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and sources). Inquiries are not scripts, so teachers are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of their particular students.

## Content Background

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* created intense reactions in the North and the South and changed how many people viewed slavery. Although it is difficult to determine the novel’s full impact on the Civil War, most historians agree that the book set the stage for the election of a presidential candidate like Abraham Lincoln. It may also have converted many resistant or apathetic Northerners to the antislavery cause and shifted the overall view of abolitionism closer to the mainstream. In the South, the book appeared to intensify efforts to defend slavery, further dividing the nation.

Stowe, whose grandmother had owned slaves, became an abolitionist after interacting with fugitive slaves while she was living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her abolitionist sympathies turned to activism after the Compromise of 1850 and the renewal of the Fugitive Slave Act. The law required citizens to help apprehend fugitive slaves and imposed stiff penalties for persons who assisted them. Fugitive slaves who were captured were tried before a special commissioner. The law also eliminated basic constitutional rights for fugitive slaves and incentivized commissioners to return those apprehended to slavery. Federal commissioners were given $10 for each accused fugitive they returned to the South but only $5 if they ruled in favor of the fugitive and released him or her. Stowe, outraged by this law, began hiding runaway slaves in her home while she was living in Maine with her husband, Calvin. Encouraged by her family to write about slavery, Stowe used her experiences in Kentucky and the many stories she had been told in Cincinnati to craft the fictional story of Tom, a pious, hardworking slave who encountered great hardship and eventual death.

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was first published as a series of chapters in the antislavery newspaper *The National Era*. Later published as a complete two-volume novel in 1852, the book became an instant bestseller; 5,000 copies were sold in the first week and 310,000 copies during the first year. The novel was also a best seller in the United Kingdom, where more than one million copies were sold. Engravings, toys, paintings, songs, and plays based on the novel became very popular and widely available. A play based on the novel ran for 365 days straight in one theater before touring. Eventually, six different plays based on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* toured the North, and many thousands of people attended.

Southern states, on the other hand, discouraged the reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and some state legislatures even criminalized the book. Throughout the South, reviewers denounced the book as being inflammatory and inaccurate. One Southern reviewer, Dr. A. Woodward, said it was a “reckless and wicked representation of the institution of slavery,” and if it continued to spread, it would push America into “revolutions, butcheries, and blood.” In response to the perceived inaccuracies portrayed by Stowe, 29 proslavery books, known as “anti-Tom novels,” were published throughout the South. Many of these books depicted enslaved blacks as happy and as better off than their free counterparts in the North.

President Lincoln is said to have greeted Stowe in 1862 by saying, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war.” Though there is little evidence that this exchange occurred, it has become a common myth that reinforces the popularly held belief that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* pushed the nation toward war. Lincoln himself stated, “Our government rests in public opinion. Whoever can change public opinion can change the government,” and changing public opinion is exactly what *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* did. Of course, the Civil War had a number of complex causes, and it is challenging to point to one thing as a primary contributing factor; however, there is no doubt that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* told the story of slavery in a personal, emotional way that caused many readers to empathize with the book’s characters.

## Content, Practices, and Literacies

This inquiry has been designed to connect key curricular content with the social studies practices every student should master. Students will have the opportunity to practice Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence from multiple sources, including *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*; practice Chronological Reasoning and Causation by describing how events like the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 motivated Harriet Beecher Stowe to write her book; and practice Comparison and Contextualization through the analysis of different reactions from people in the North and South. Additionally, the Taking Informed Action activity emphasizes the power of Civic Participation.

Students’ content knowledge and skills are assessed in the inquiry through formative performance tasks, which increase in complexity during the inquiry. These tasks progress from summarizing the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to identifying quotes from the book, making inferences about Stowe’s intentions in describing slavery, and comparing viewpoints represented in contemporary reviews of the book. The final formative performance task allows students to initiate their arguments through a structured discussion. The summative performance task asks students to put all of this information together to craft an argument about the book’s impact.

The New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy offer social studies teachers numerous opportunities to integrate literacy goals and skills into their social studies instruction. The Common Core supports the inquiry process through reading rich informational texts, writing evidence-based arguments, speaking and listening in public venues, and using academic vocabulary that complements the pedagogical directions advocated in the New York State K–12 Social Studies Framework. At the end of this inquiry is an explication of how teachers might integrate literacy skills into the content, instruction, and resource decisions they make. The Common Core connections are listed on the last page of this inquiry.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staging the Compelling Question | |
| Compelling Question | **Can words lead to war?** |
| Featured Source | **Source A:** Student Video on Kailash Satyarthi |

This inquiry opens with the question “Can words lead to war?” To begin to understand the compelling question, students should first grapple with the power of words. Teachers may set up an activity where students think about the power of words with a quote from Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Words—so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.

*—American Note-Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, May 18, 1848

*The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 18, No. 110, December 1866. Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17217/17217-h/17217-h.htm#PASSAGES_FROM_HAWTHORNES_NOTE-BOOKS>.

Harriet Beecher Stowe certainly knew how to combine words, and in this inquiry students carefully consider their power. To get students thinking about why words matter, teachers can use such questions as these:

* Does what you say matter?
* Does how you say something matter?
* What is the power of words at home, at school, and with friends?
* How responsible should we be for the words we say and write?
* How can we change the world for the better with words?

These questions set the stage for this inquiry by getting student to think about the power of words. Teachers might also discuss students’ personal experiences with their power by asking if they regret something they recently said and encouraging them to share stories about their own personal verbal missteps. Next, teachers might ask students about a time when they spoke up for something they thought was unfair. This should appeal to their sense of fairness and introduces the idea that words can create positive change.

Follow up by asking students when they were successful in standing up for something. This question provides students with an opportunity to think about what success looks like. Next, teachers might ask about different ways to communicate what we think. Students’ answers will likely include numerous modes of communication, including speaking, writing, and participating in social media. To make a personal connection and create a precursor for the Taking Informed Action task, teachers can ask students when they might be willing to speak out on something, and then have students watch the video *Kailash Satyarthi*, produced by middle school students in New York who were using words to try to bring about positive change. The video features students describing the work of activist and 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi and his efforts to end child labor. As the inquiry proceeds, students can be prompted to think about what these children were trying to do with the words they used in their video compared with what Stowe was trying to do with her words.

Teachers may decide to support students’ work in the Taking Informed Action task concurrent to the inquiry; this will provide them with the opportunity to learn about how others have described a current social problem as they learn about the problem of slavery through Stowe’s book. Students can then examine their motivations for investigating a current social problem, such as child labor, trafficking, or poverty, while learning about Stowe’s motivation for writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. As the inquiry continues and students learn about the reactions to and impact of Stowe’s book in the subsequent formative performance tasks, they may be provided with a parallel opportunity to do the same with their Taking Informed Action topic.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staging the Compelling Question | |
| Featured Source | **Source A:** Springville Middle School, Springville, NY, video, *Kailash Satyarthi*, 2014. |



From the Speak Truth To Power Student Video Contest website. <http://www.speaktruthvideo.com/#!c3-connection/cf55>.

This video on Kailash Satyarthi, produced by seventh-grade New York State students, was the third-place winner of the Speak Truth To Power video contest, which encourages middle and high school students to become engaged in human rights through video production. Students are asked to choose a human rights issue and an activist identified by Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and then create a three- to five-minute video that creatively discusses the issue/activist and any local connections that might exist. Students also reflect on the larger lessons the activist's life can teach us and how we can all make a difference with the chosen issue.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 1 | |
| Supporting Question | How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery? |
| Formative Performance Task | Write a summary of the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that includes main ideas and supporting details from Stowe’s description of slavery in the book. |
| Featured Sources | **Source A:** Summary of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  **Source B:** Excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  **Source C:** Illustrations from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* |
| Conceptual Understandings | (7.7b) Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in various ways in the 19th century. The abolitionist movement also worked to raise awareness and generate resistance to the institution of slavery. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the public perception of slavery. |
| Social Studies Practices | Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

## Supporting Question

The first supporting question asks students to read and analyze selections from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to understand how Harriet Beecher Stowe described slavery in her book. The emotional, personal tone Stowe used created intense reactions in the North and the South. By considering this question, students will come to know more about the experience of slavery and how related events affected people like Stowe.

## Formative Performance Task

The formative performance task calls on students to write a summary of the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that includes main ideas and supporting details from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s description of slavery by completing a Source Analysis Chart for selected passages and illustrations from the book. A brief overview of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* included in the sources for this taskintroduces students to the basic plot and characters. Stowe effectively appealed to emotion with her rich description of the characters and the conditions they faced. Although students would have to read the entire book to understand the many complex characters, an examination of selected ones will help them get closer to an understanding of Stowe’s approach to describing slavery.

Teachers might read the passages aloud for students who require additional reading support while having other students read silently. Students can complete the Source Analysis Chart individually or with a partner, and the teacher might decide to have a discussion about their answers or collect the chart for feedback later. Students will practice Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as they complete the Source Analysis Chart to summarize the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and identify the main idea and supporting details from text passages and illustrations.

This formative performance task is an important step toward the Summative Performance Task because the style of the book is one of the aspects that made it so appealing to people in the North and so reviled in the South. Completing this task will help students understand the reactions to the book as presented in Formative Performance Tasks 3 and 4.

## Featured Sources

The sources for this second formative performance task include excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and two illustrations that accompanied the first edition.

FeatureD Source A is brief summary of the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The book follows the stories of Tom and Eliza, both of whom escape after their master sells Eliza’s son, along with Tom and George, to pay off debts. The summary includes general information about the plot and brief introductions to the book’s main characters.

Featured Source B includes four excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The first excerpt exemplifies the hopelessness of many of the enslaved persons who are depicted in the book. In this selection, a slave named George speaks with his wife, Eliza, about his cruel master. He describes his miserable life and concludes, “I wish I were dead.” After enduring abuse, George eventually escapes, hoping soon to reunite with his family. Later in the story his wife, Eliza, and his son, Harry, who have a different master, escape to Canada.

The second excerpt shows how Harriet Beecher Stowe describes the experiences of slaves who have been separated from their children by their masters. In the passage, Eliza is speaking with a friendly white woman who has taken her in after she escapes from Kentucky and crosses the Ohio River into the free state of Ohio. Eliza flees after finding out that her master is going to sell her son, Harry, to an unscrupulous slave trader. Eliza and Harry are eventually joined by her husband, George, in Canada.

Stowe portrays some slaveholders in a sympathetic way by exposing some of the doubts they might have felt about slavery. The third excerpt features one of these slaveholders, Augustine St. Claire, who shares his frustrations about slavery with his cousin and describes how he is disgusted with the brutality of many men who own slaves. Throughout the book, St. Claire is portrayed as a kind and caring master who believes he has no other option than to own slaves.

The fourth excerpt is Stowe’s description of a slave auction. At a slave auction house, Uncle Tom is sold to a cruel master named Simon Legree. Another slave, a woman named Susan, is separated from her daughter, Emmeline, when they are sold to different masters.

FeatureD Source C includes two illustrations from the first edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The first illustration depicts a scene in chapter 3 when Eliza finds out that Uncle Tom and her son, Harry, have been sold to a slave trader. The second illustration shows a slave auction. The details in this second illustration are, in part, described in the fourth text excerpt included in Featured Source B.

## Additional Resources

* Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, information about *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.<https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/utc/>.
* *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/>.

Source Analysis Chart

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Summary | | | | | | | |
| What is the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? | |  | | | | | |
| Details | | | | | | | |
|  | Passage 1 | | Passage 2 | Passage 3 | Passage 4 | Illustration 1 | Illustration 2 |
| What are the main ideas in the selected passages and illustrations? |  | |  |  |  |  |  |
| What details support those main ideas? |  | |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tone | | | | | | | |
| What emotions are evident in the text passages and the illustrations? | |  | | | | | |
| Intention | | | | | | | |
| What do you think Harriet Beecher Stowe was trying to accomplish in her writing? | |  | | | | | |
| Reactions | | | | | | | |
| How do you think people reacted to the ideas in the text and the illustrations? | |  | | | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 1 | |
| Featured Source A | **Source A:** Summary of the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe |

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* opens on the Shelby plantation in Kentucky as two enslaved people, Tom and four-year-old Harry, are sold to pay Shelby family debts. The story focuses on two main characters: Tom, a strong, religious man living with his wife and three young children, and Eliza Harris, an intelligent and brave enslaved women and mother of Harry.

When the novel begins, Eliza’s husband, George Harris, unaware of Harry’s danger, has already escaped, planning to purchase his family’s freedom later. After overhearing that her master, Mr. Shelby, is planning to sell Tom and Harry to a slave trader, Eliza runs away, making a dramatic escape over the frozen Ohio River with Harry in her arms. Eventually, George, Eliza, and Harry are reunited and make it to freedom in Canada.

Tom decides not to run away to protect his family, who might be sold in his place. After he is sold south, Tom meets Topsy, a young black girl whose mischievous behavior hides her pain; Eva, a young white girl whose death is a dramatic moment in the book; the charming, elegant, but passive Augustine St. Clare; and finally, the cruel, violent Simon Legree. Tom’s deep faith gives him an inner strength that frustrates his enemies as he moves toward his fate in Louisiana.

The novel ends when both Tom and Eliza escape slavery: Eliza and her family reach Canada, but Tom’s freedom comes with death. Simon Legree, Tom’s third and final master, has Tom whipped to death for refusing to deny his faith or betray the hiding place of two fugitive women.

Adapted from the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center’s synopsis, <https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/utc/>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 1 | |
| Featured Source B | **Source B:** Harriet Beecher Stowe, novel about antebellum slavery in the United States, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (excerpts), 1852 |

#### Passage 1 (Excerpt from Chapter 3)

*Summary: George Harris is speaking with his wife, Eliza, about his cruel master. After enduring abuse, George eventually escapes. His wife and his son, Harry, who have a different master, later escape to Canada.*

Mrs. Shelby had gone on her visit, and Eliza stood in the verandah, rather dejectedly looking after the retreating carriage, when a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned, and a bright smile lighted up her fine eyes.

“George, is it you? How you frightened me! Well; I am so glad you ‘s come! Missis is gone to spend the afternoon; so come into my little room, and we’ll have the time all to ourselves.”

Saying this, she drew him into a neat little apartment opening on the verandah, where she generally sat at her sewing, within call of her mistress.

“How glad I am!—why don’t you smile?—and look at Harry—how he grows.” The boy stood shyly regarding his father through his curls, holding close to the skirts of his mother’s dress. “Isn’t he beautiful?” said Eliza, lifting his long curls and kissing him.

“I wish he’d never been born!” said George, bitterly. “I wish I’d never been born myself!”

Surprised and frightened, Eliza sat down, leaned her head on her husband’s shoulder, and burst into tears.

“There now, Eliza, it’s too bad for me to make you feel so, poor girl!” said he, fondly; ‘it’s too bad. O, how I wish you never had seen me—you might have been happy!”

“George! George! how can you talk so? What dreadful thing has happened, or is going to happen? I’m sure we’ve been very happy, till lately.”

“So we have, dear,” said George. Then drawing his child on his knee, he gazed intently on his glorious dark eyes, and passed his hands through his long curls.

“Just like you, Eliza; and you are the handsomest woman I ever saw, and the best one I ever wish to see; but, oh, I wish I’d never seen you, nor you me!”

“O, George, how can you!”

“Yes Eliza, it’s all misery, misery, misery! My life is bitter as wormwood; the very life is burning out of me. I’m a poor, miserable, forlorn drudge; I shall only drag you down with me, that’s all. What’s the use of our trying to do anything, trying to know anything, trying to be anything? What’s the use of living? I wish I was dead!”

Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#link2HCH0003>.

#### Passage 2 (Excerpt from Chapter 9)

*Summary: Fugitive slave Eliza is speaking with a friendly white woman who has taken her in after escaping Kentucky and crossing the Ohio River into the free state of Ohio. Eliza flees after finding out that her master is going to sell her son. Harry. to an unscrupulous slave trader. Eliza and Harry are eventually joined by her husband, George, in Canada.*

“I have lost two, one after another,—left ‘em buried there when I came away; and I had only this one left. I never slept a night without him; he was all I had. He was my comfort and pride, day and night; and, ma’am, they were going to take him away from me,—to sell him,—sell him down south, ma’am, to go all alone,—a baby that had never been away from his mother in his life!”

Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#link2HCH0009>.

#### Passage 3 (Excerpt from Chapter 19)

*Summary: In this passage, a slave owner named Augustine St. Claire shares his frustrations with slavery with his cousin.*

“I declare to you,” said he, suddenly stopping before his cousin, “(it’s no sort of use to talk or to feel on this subject), but I declare to you, there have been times when I have thought, if the whole country would sink, and hide all this injustice and misery from the light, I would willingly sink with it. When I have been travelling up and down on our boats, or about on my collecting tours, and reflected that every brutal, disgusting, mean, low-lived fellow I met, was allowed by our laws to become absolute despot of as many men, women and children, as he could cheat, steal, or gamble money enough to buy,—when I have seen such men in actual ownership of helpless children, of young girls and women,— I have been ready to curse my country, to curse the human race!”

Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#link2HCH0019>.

#### Passage 4 (Excerpt from Chapter 30)

*Summary: At a slave auction house, Uncle Tom is sold to a cruel master named Simon Legree. Another slave, Susan, is separated from her daughter, Emmeline, when they are sold to different masters.*

Tom hardly realized anything; but still the bidding went on,—rattling, clattering, now French, now English. Down goes the hammer again,—Susan is sold! She goes down from the block, stops, looks wistfully back,—her daughter stretches her hands towards her. She looks with agony in the face of the man who has bought her,—a respectable middle-aged man, of benevolent countenance.

“O, Mas’r, please do buy my daughter!”

“I’d like to, but I’m afraid I can’t afford it!” said the gentleman, looking, with painful interest, as the young girl mounted the block, and looked around her with a frightened and timid glance.

The blood flushes painfully in her otherwise colorless cheek, her eye has a feverish fire, and her mother groans to see that she looks more beautiful than she ever saw her before. The auctioneer sees his advantage, and expatiates volubly in mingled French and English, and bids rise in rapid succession.

“I’ll do anything in reason,” said the benevolent-looking gentleman, pressing in and joining with the bids. In a few moments they have run beyond his purse. He is silent; the auctioneer grows warmer; but bids gradually drop off. It lies now between an aristocratic old citizen and our bullet-headed acquaintance. The citizen bids for a few turns, contemptuously measuring his opponent; but the bullet-head has the advantage over him, both in obstinacy and concealed length of purse, and the controversy lasts but a moment; the hammer falls,—he has got the girl, body and soul, unless God help her!

Her master is Mr. Legree, who owns a cotton plantation on the Red River. She is pushed along into the same lot with Tom and two other men, and goes off, weeping as she goes. The benevolent gentleman is sorry; but, then, the thing happens every day! One sees girls and mothers crying, at these sales, always! it can’t be helped, &c.; and he walks off, with his acquisition, in another direction.

Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#link2HCH0030>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 1 | |
| Featured Source C | **Source C:** Hammatt Billings, illustrations from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe,1852, with introductory descriptions |

#### Image 1

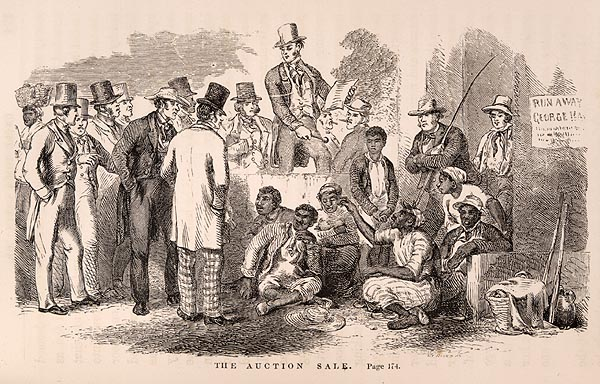
*Summary: In this illustration, Eliza comes to tell Uncle Tom and his wife, Chloe, that Tom and George and Eliza’s son, Harry, have been sold to a slave trader. Eliza has just overheard the news from her master, Mr. Shelby, that the trader will arrive in the morning to take Tom and Harry away. In a panic, Eliza plans to run away that night.*



Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* 1st ed. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852. Public Domain. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/illustra/52illf.html>.

#### Image 2

*Summary: A slave auction featuring several characters from the book, including the auctioneer, Hagar, Albert, Haley, and other slaves and slave buyers.*



Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* 1st ed. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852. Public Domain. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/illustra/52illf.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 2 | |
| Supporting Question | What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? |
| Formative Performance Task | List four quotes in the sources that point to Stowe’s motivation and write a paragraph explaining her motivation. |
| Featured Sources | **Source A:** Harriet Beecher Stowe’s concluding remarks to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  **Source B:** Letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Lord Denman |
| Conceptual Understandings | (7.7b) Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in various ways in the 19th century. The abolitionist movement also worked to raise awareness and generate resistance to the institution of slavery. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the public perception of slavery. |
| Social Studies Practices | Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence Chronological Reasoning and Causation |

## Supporting Question

This supporting question asks students to consider Harriet Beecher Stowe’s motivation in writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. By analyzing the sources, students will see that Stowe’s motivation originated in her Christian faith, her need to speak out for the oppressed, and the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. The supporting question asks about the events and policies of the time that moved Stowe to write her book; included among those events and policies were the Compromise of 1850 and the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act.

## Formative Performance Task

The formative performance task requires students to read and analyze two historical sources written by Harriet Beecher Stowe that help explain why she wrote the book. The successful completion of this task will allow them to understand Stowe’s motivation for writing and will help them later in the inquiry as they consider the book’s impact. Considering the difficulty of the sources, teachers will need to provide the opportunity for students to define difficult words and carefully guide them through the sources using a close-reading strategy. An approach to supporting their close reading may involve having them underline words, phrases, and sentences that describe Stowe’s emotional reaction to slavery and, more specifically, to the Fugitive Slave Act.

After reading the two sources on Stowe’s motivation, students should select four quotes that point to it and then translate those quotes into their own words. Using these four quotes, students should write a paragraph explaining her motivation. Teachers may use the Organizing Quotes Chart on the next page to support students in this work. In this formative performance task, students will be using the social studies practices of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence, as well as Chronological Reasoning and Causation. Specifically, students are Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as they identify the four quotes from Stowe’s conclusion and her letter to Lord Denman. They are practicing with Chronological Reasoning and Causation when they think about Stowe’s motivation in writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as emerging from her experiences with slavery in the 1840s and after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. Struggling readers might be provided with an adapted version of these sources.

Organizing Quotes Chart

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Text from the conclusion of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and/or Harriet Beecher Stowe’s letter to Lord Denman | Text in students’ words |
| Quote 1 | *“… when she heard, with perfect surprise and consternation, Christian and humane people actually recommending the remanding escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizen … she could only think, These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is …”* |  |
| Quote 2 |  |  |
| Quote 3 |  |  |
| Quote 4 |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Motivation | **Prompt**: Given the quotes you identified, what was Stowe’s motivation for writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? |
|  |

## Featured Sources

Featured Source A is a selection taken from the conclusion of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Written by the author in the third person, this excerpt reveals much about why Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote the book. In this passage, she points to the Compromise of 1850, mainly the Fugitive Slave Act, as the major impetus for writing her novel. Christianity is a common theme in Stowe’s writing, and she mentions it several times in Featured Source A. Stowe often wrote about the immoral nature of slavery and included frequent references to it in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin.*

Featured Source B is a letter Stowe wrote to Lord Thomas Denman before she traveled to England in 1853. Lord Denman was an admirer of Stowe who served as lord chief justice. The letter is a second source where Stowe explains her motivation for writing the book, describing her motivation coming from the injustice of slavery and the need to speak for those who have no voice. Stowe passionately proclaims that slavery is immoral and unjust. The entire letter is included with this inquiry along with recommendations for how to use an excerpt from the letter.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 2 | |
| Featured Source A | **Source A:** Harriet Beecher Stowe, concluding remarks, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852 |

*NOTE: Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote this conclusion in the third person. Teachers may want to have students define the words highlighted in the text before or during reading.*

The writer has often been inquired of, by correspondents from different parts of the country, whether this narrative is a true one; and to these inquiries she will give one general answer.

The separate incidents that compose the narrative are, to a very great extent, ***authentic***, occurring, many of them, either under her own observation, or that of her personal friends. She or her friends have observed characters the counterpart of almost all that are here introduced; and many of the sayings are word for word as heard herself, or reported to her.

…

For many years of her life, the author avoided all reading upon or ***allusion*** to the subject of slavery, considering it as too painful to be inquired into, and one which advancing light and civilization would certainly live down. But, since the legislative act of 1850, when she heard, with perfect surprise and ***consternation***, Christian and humane people actually recommending the ***remanding*** escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens,—when she heard, on all hands, from kind, ***compassionate*** and ***estimable*** people, in the free states of the North, ***deliberations*** and discussions as to what Christian duty could be on this head,—she could only think, These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is; if they did, such a question could never be open for discussion. And from this arose a desire to exhibit it in a living dramatic reality. She has ***endeavored*** to show it fairly, in its best and its worst phases. In its best aspect, she has, perhaps, been successful; but, oh! who shall say what yet remains untold in that valley and shadow of death, that lies the other side?

…

The writer has lived, for many years, on the frontier-line of slave states, and has had great opportunities of observation among those who formerly were slaves. They have been in her family as servants; and, in default of any other school to receive them, she has, in many cases, had them instructed in a family school, with her own children. She has also the testimony of missionaries, among the fugitives in Canada, in coincidence with her own experience; and her deductions, with regard to the capabilities of the race, are encouraging in the highest degree.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* 1st ed., conclusion XLV. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852. Public Domain. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#link2HCH0045>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 2 | |
| Featured Source B | **Source B:** Harriet Beecher Stowe, letter to Lord Thomas Denman, January 20, 1853 |

*Note: The text of this letter is not currently available online, so the full text is provided here for teachers. An excerpt is also provided for use in the classroom.*

*Full text of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Letter to Lord Denman, January 20, 1853*

My Lord

Could anything flatter me into an unwarrantable estimate of myself, it would be commendation from such sources as your Lordship.

But I am utterly incredulous of all that is said, it passes by me like a dream.

I can only see that when a higher Being has purposes to be accomplished he can make even “a grain of mustard seed” the means.

I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother, I was oppressed & heartbroken with sorrows & injustice I saw—because, as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity, because as a lover of my country I trembled at the coming day of wrath. It is no merit in the sorrowful that they weep, or to the oppressed & smothering that they gasp & struggle nor to me that I must speak for the oppressed who cannot speak for themselves.

My Lord, such men as your Lordship have great power. You can do much. The expression of your opinion is of great weight. So does this horrible evil paralyse public sentiment here that we who stand for liberty, must look for aid from the public sentiment of nations & in producing that sentiment none are so powerful as the great minds of England.

The hope therefore which I conceive from seeing such men in England as Bishop Whateley, The Earls of Carlisle & Shaftesbury, Arthur Helper, Kingsley & your Lordship interested in our movements is great. Each man of any distinction in England has weight with a certain circle of minds here & by their distance from the evil & entire disconnection can present it in a light very different from which any native born American can. Any one here can be hushed down for all the capital, all the political power & much of the Ecclesiastical is against the agitation of this subject- but you can force them to agitate.

In your reviews, in your literature you can notice & hold up before the world those awful facts which but for you they would go on scornfully denying as they have done.

Furthermore there are men in Slave states repressed & kept under who are more glad then they dare to say at what you do—they hope that you will keep on such a state of things as they can take advantage in Emancipation.

I have now nearly through the press a volume entitled “Key To Uncle Tom’s Cabin”— it contains documentary & attested evidence to show that if my representations have erred any where it is by being under rather than over coloured. Oh! my Lord! never was such an awful story told under the Sun. I have written it in perfect horror- One third of the book is taken up with legal documents, statute laws, decisions of courts, reports of trials—It is worse than I supposed or dreamt. My Lord, I am conscious that this is not my work, for mine is another field, but I was forced to it by the unblushing denials & most impudent representations with regard to what I said in my Book about Slave Law.

It seems to me that this tremendous story cannot be told to the civilised world without forcing attention. On the whole there is hope—there is movement there is evidently “a stirring of Bones in this valley of Vision”.

Standing as I do, between the Living & the Dead feeble in health, oppressed with labour & often very sorrowful, I have little realisation of anything personal in this matter further than the consciousness of struggle & labour.

I thank your Lordship therefore more for the noble & hearty interest which you feel in this sacred & suffering cause, than for the very kind opinion you have been kind enough to express of me.

It has done much good. All that the book has done might have been crushed in this Country but for the sympathy & support of your Country.

May God bless it & you is the prayer of yours very gratefully

Public Domain. Document is housed in Small Special Collections of the University of Virginia Library in box folder 1:29 (ALS, 4 p.p. on 1).

*Excerpt from Stowe’s Letter to Lord Denman, January 20, 1853*

My Lord

I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother, I was oppressed & heartbroken with sorrows & injustice I saw—because, as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity, because as a lover of my country I trembled at the coming day of wrath. It is no merit in the sorrowful that they weep, or to the oppressed & smothering that they gasp & struggle nor to me that I must speak for the oppressed who cannot speak for themselves.

…

The hope therefore which I conceive from seeing such men in England as Bishop Whateley, The Earls of Carlisle & Shaftesbury, Arthur Helper, Kingsley & your Lordship interested in our movements is great. Each man of any distinction in England has weight with a certain circle of minds here & by their distance from the evil & entire disconnection can present it in a light very different from which any native born American can. Any one here can be hushed down for all the capital, all the political power & much of the Ecclesiastical

is against the agitation of this subject- but you can force them to agitate.

…

Standing as I do, between the Living & the Dead feeble in health, oppressed with labour & often very sorrowful, I have little realisation of anything personal in this matter further than the consciousness of struggle & labour.

Public Domain. Document is housed in Small Special Collections of the University of Virginia Library in box folder 1:29 (ALS, 4 p.p. on 1).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 3 | |
| Supporting Question | How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? |
| Formative Performance Task | Make a T-chart comparing viewpoints expressed in newspaper reviews of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and make a claim about the differences. |
| Featured Sources | **Source A:** Review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published in the *Boston Morning Post*  **Source B:** Review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published in the *Southern Press Review* |
| Conceptual Understandings | (7.7b) Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in various ways in the 19th century. The abolitionist movement also worked to raise awareness and generate resistance to the institution of slavery. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the public perception of slavery. |
| Social Studies Practices | Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence Comparison and Contextualization |

## Supporting Question

The publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* elicited strong responses from people in the North and the South. Hundreds of reviews and articles on the book were written in the years following its publication. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* soon became a best seller, outpacing all other publications of the time (except for the Bible). This supporting question asks students to consider how people in the North and the South typically reacted to book. By analyzing different views, students will begin to understand the strong reactions that had a powerful impact on public opinion in both the North and the South.

## Formative Performance Task

The third formative performance task requires students to analyze two book reviews of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to compare the viewpoints expressed in the newspapers using a T-chart or other teacher-created organizer. Using the chart, students should reflect on the following questions.

* What are the main ideas and arguments in each review?
* How does each reviewer portray the book?
* Are there any similarities between the reviews?
* How might the authors’ locations have influenced their reviews?

After they have completed the T-chart, students will write a claim about the differences between the two reviews.

To support students as they construct their claims, teachers might ask them to choose one word to describe the tone of each review. For example, students might select the word “genius” from Featured Source A. Using the word “genius,” students can then compose a sentence. For example: “The *Boston Morning Post* described Harriet Beecher Stowe as a **genius**.”Students can then look for a quote that goes along with the word. For example: “… [Stowe] produced with a nice tact, and ingenuity, and a thorough knowledge of human nature, etc.”Next, students can turn their statement into a question: “Why did the *Boston Morning Post* describe Harriet Beecher Stowe as a **geniu*s***?” By posing an educated answer to their question and using the quote, they can pull it all together as a claim with evidence. For example: “The *Boston Morning Post* described Harriet Beecher Stowe as a ‘genius.’ The author of the review thought the book was well-written, powerful, and smart, or, as he put it ‘nice tact, and ingenuity, and a thorough knowledge of human nature.’ The author might have been an abolitionist.”

Completing this task will give students a glimpse into the passionate reactions people had to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. While the featured sources for this task represent views widely held in the North and South, students should also know that a diversity of opinions could be found in both regions. For example, proslavery sentiment was strong in Pennsylvania’s Shenandoah Valley, and Quaker abolitionists were a powerful force in western North Carolina.

In this task, students will be able to work with the social studies practices of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence and Comparison and Contextualization as they identify the differences in reactions of people in the North and in the South to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Students should be provided with a model T-chart that includes questions to support their analyses. Some students may need assistance reading the passages. In such cases, the teacher may read aloud or pair good readers with students who have a more difficult time reading.

T-Chart for Analyzing Reviews of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Boston Morning Post* | *Southern Press Review* |
| What are the main ideas and arguments in each review? |  |  |
| How does each reviewer portray the book? |  |  |
| Are there any similarities between the reviews? |  |  |
| How might the authors’ locations have influenced their reviews? |  |  |

## Featured Sources

Featured Source A is a selection from a review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that was published in the *Boston Morning Post*. The author of the review describes the novel in glowing terms: He acknowledges the personal, emotional tone Harriet Beecher Stowe uses to develop the story, stating, “and one is often laughing with wet eye.” The author also discusses Stowe’s ability to look at both sides of the story, using the character of Augustine St. Claire, a sympathetic slave owner, as an example. In analyzing this source, students begin to understand the strong positive reactions of people to the book that developed across much of the North.

FeatureD Source B is an unsigned review that was published in the *Southern Press Review* in 1852. It describes the book as an unfair and exaggerated “caricature” of slavery. The author claims that only those characters who oppose slavery on some level are cast in a positive light, stating, “Those in favor of slavery are slave-traders, slave-catchers, and the most weak, depraved, cruel and malignant of beings and demons.” Throughout the South, there was widespread visceral criticism from people of the book. In analyzing this source, students will begin to understand the strong negative reactions that typically emerged from people in the South.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 3 | |
| Featured Source A | **Source A:** W.B.S., review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* published in the *Boston Morning Post* (excerpt)*,* May 3, 1852 |

*NOTE: Teachers may want to have students define the words highlighted in the text before or during reading. The following is an excerpt of the review published in the* Boston Morning Post*. The* Boston Morning Post *(later renamed the* Boston P*ost) was one of the most popular daily newspapers in the New England region in the 19th and early 20th centuries.*

Uncle Tom’s Cabin as much as any novel we know of, is stamped on every page with genius. The author cannot touch a single incident without showing that she bears the sacred fire. How strong and wide may be the blaze we know not, but taking the present novel as the first effort in this line of writing, it is a wonderful composition, ***emanating*** from true genius, and produced with a nice tact, and ***ingenuity***, and a thorough knowledge of human nature, etc. The scene at Senator Bird’s, the flight across the Ohio, the interview of George with the manufacturer, at the road-side inn, the night scene in the steamer—nay, many other passages—are not prominent portions of the work, but they are given in a masterly manner. Not one word in the book suggests ***mediocrity***, whether the pictures of slavery please or displease. And the death of Eva!

We have said that some chapters are beyond criticism—the reader will find them so. And with all the ***pathos*** and intensity of most of the story, there is no jot of dulness—no harping on one string. A vein of humor and ***drollery*** ***meanders*** through it, and one is often laughing with wet eyes. But brilliant as is “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” as a literary work, it is yet more creditable to the author in another point of view. It proves that unlike most women, and very many men, Mrs. Stowe has the high ability of looking on both sides of one question. With feelings and principles equally opposed to slavery, for its unavoidable evils as well as its accidental abuses, she is yet able to paint the slaveholder as he lives and moves, with no touch of bigotry or fanaticism. No southerner need be ashamed of the noble, kind and generous St. Clare, or the angel-child, his daughter.

“W. B. S.,” Boston Morning Post, May 3, 1852. Public Domain. Reproduced from Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere50at.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 3 | |
| Featured Source B | **Source B:** Unknown author, review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (excerpt), published in the *Southern Press Review*, Washington, DC, 1852 |

*NOTE: Teachers may want to have students define the words highlighted in the text before or during reading. The following is an excerpt of the review published in the* Southern Press Review*. The* Southern Press Review *was a short-lived newspaper published in Washington, DC, from 1850 to 1852.*

Uncle Tom’s Cabin is an anti-slavery novel. It is a ***caricature*** of slavery. It selects for description the most ***odious*** features of slavery—the escape and pursuit of fugitive slaves, the sale and separation of domestic slaves, the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. It portrays the slaves of the story as more moral, intelligent, courageous, elegant and beautiful than their masters and mistresses; and where it concedes any of these qualities to the whites, it is to such only as are, even though slaveholders, opposed to slavery. Those in favor of slavery are slave-traders, slave-catchers, and the most weak, ***depraved***, cruel and ***malignant*** of beings and demons.

It deserves to be considered that the defense of the South was a documentary argument, consisting chiefly of a collection of all the evidence on the subject which existed in an ***authentic*** shape. The attack on the South is a novel—a romance. The system of the South relies on fact—the sentiment of the North flies to fiction. This is significant. For some time before, the North, the practical, calculating, unimaginative North, claimed the facts. But since the appearance of ‘the North and the South,’ that ***pretension*** has almost been abandoned.

Public Domain. Reproduced from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere27at.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 4 | |
| Supporting Question | What was the impact of Uncle Tom’s Cabin on abolitionism? |
| Formative Performance Task | Participate in a structured discussion regarding the impact *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had on abolitionism. |
| Featured Sources | **Source A:** Excerpt from Charles Sumner’s Senate speech  **Source B:** Article by John Ball Jr. published in *The Liberator*  **Source C:** Sales of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 1851–1853* |
| Conceptual Understandings | (7.7b) Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in various ways in the 19th century. The abolitionist movement also worked to raise awareness and generate resistance to the institution of slavery. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine ways in which enslaved Africans organized and resisted their conditions. |
| Social Studies Practices | Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

## Supporting Question

Now that students have examined Harriet Beecher Stowe’s motivations, excerpts from the book, and the immediate reactions of people in the North and South, they can begin to look more closely at the impact *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had on the public perception of slavery. This supporting question asks students to consider how the book affected abolitionism in America.

## Formative Performance Task

The goal of the formative performance task is for students to participate in a structured discussion that will help them develop arguments that can be used later in the summative assessment. The first two formative performance tasks helped students understand Harriet Beecher Stowe’s use of emotional language and imagery and the motivations for writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The third task helped them extend their understanding by comparing reactions of people to the book in the North and South. In this fourth task, they move even further by examining the book’s effect on abolitionism in the years leading to the outbreak of the Civil War. While some attitudes about slavery may have hardened in the South, the greatest impact was among those, mostly in the North, who may have been somewhat sympathetic toward the cause of abolitionists. The sources for this formative performance task offer a glimpse at how people viewed the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the abolitionist movement.

After analyzing the sources in the fourth task, students should use the knowledge they have gained from those sources and from those in Formative Performance Tasks 1–3 to participate in a structured discussion about how *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* may have affected abolitionism. Teachers should structure the discussion using question prompts to stimulate students’ statements in response. Students can be placed in discussion groups or pairs, or might participate individually, and should be encouraged to respond with belief statements and evidence from the sources they have worked with in this inquiry.

#### Sample discussion prompts

* Why was the response to the Fugitive Slave Act so strong?
* What life experiences of Harriet Beecher Stowe might have affected her views on slavery?
* How did Stowe describe slavery in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*?
* What are some things you expected and some things you did not expect in Stowe’s description of slavery?
* Why was *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* so popular?
* Why might *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* have caused people to change their opinion of slavery?

This task will give students a chance to work with the social studies practice of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as they sort through information that is suggestive of how the *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* might have affected public opinion about the abolition of slavery in the years before the Civil War. For students who need support reading difficult text, pair them with a stronger reader to read portions of the text aloud.

## Featured Sources

Featured Source A is an excerpt from a speech given by Charles Sumner in the US Senate on his motion to repeal the Fugitive Slave Act. By analyzing this source, students will have an example of how one influential US politician viewed the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Featured Source B is an excerpt from a letter by British-born abolitionist journalist James Redpath (aka John Ball Jr.) discussing the Fugitive Slave Act. In the letter, he discusses how plays based on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* affected efforts to capture fugitive slaves. He describes how it was once possible to catch fugitive slaves, but, because of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, this is now impossible. This source provides one example of how viewpoints on slavery, specifically the Fugitive Slave Act, were changed in the North.

Featured Source C is a chart showing sales of various editions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the first two years of its publication. Sales of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* far outpaced those of other publications. The book was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and trailed only the Bible in overall sales.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 4 | |
| Featured Source A | **Source A:** Charles Sumner, speech on his motion to repeal the Fugitive Slave Bill (excerpt), US Senate, August 26, 1852 |

*NOTE: Teachers may want to have students define the words highlighted in the text before or during reading.*

Speech of Hon. Chas. Sumner, Of Massachusetts, On His Motion To Repeal The Fugitive Slave Bill, In The Senate Of The United States. Thursday, August 26, 1852.

But the great heart of the people ***recoils*** from this ***enactment*** (Fugitive Slave Act). It ***palpitates*** for the fugitive, and rejoices in his escape. Sir, I am telling you facts. The literature of the age is all on his side. The songs, more ***potent*** than laws, are for him. The poets, with voices of melody, are for Freedom. Who could sing for Slavery? They who make the permanent opinion of the country, who mould our youth, whose words, dropped into the soul, are the germs of character, ***supplicate*** for the Slave. And now, sir, behold a new and heavenly ally. A woman, inspired by Christian genius, enters the lists, like another Joan of Arc, and with marvellous power sweeps the chords of the popular heart. Now melting to tears, and now inspiring to rage, her work everywhere touches the conscience, and makes the Slave-Hunter more hateful. In a brief period, nearly 100,000 copies of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* have been already circulated. But this ***extraordinary*** and sudden success—***surpassing*** all other instances in the records of literature—cannot be regarded merely as the triumph of genius. Higher far than this, it is the testimony of the people, by an ***unprecedented*** act, against the Fugitive Slave Bill.

*The National Era*, unsigned article, Washington, DC, September 2, 1852. Public Domain. Reproduced from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/notices/noar01ait.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 4 | |
| Featured Source B | **Source B:** John Ball Jr., magazine article, “A Journey to Charleston, No. IV” (excerpt), *The Liberator*, September 8, 1854 |

*Note: John Ball Jr. was a pseudonym for James Redpath, who was a British-born abolitionist journalist, agitator, and impresario. He wrote a series of letters to William Lloyd Garrison’s* Liberator *and* National Anti-Slavery Standard *and used other aliases to protect his identity and safety while he interviewed slaves throughout the South and introduced Northern abolitionist ideas to the Southern press.*

#### [from] A JOURNEY TO CHARLESTON. NO. IV.

BY THE WANDERING GENTILE.

*Talks with the Slaves in South Carolina--the Sugar House.*

I replied that I believed it would now be impossible, without a desperate and bloody contest between the municipal authorities and people of the city of New York, for a slaveholder to pluck a slave ‘as a brand *into* the burning,’ after he had once trod the soil of Manhattan Island, and that no attempt would ever again be made to execute the Fugitive Slave Act in our commercial metropolis. I said that perhaps a slaveholder might have succeeded in catching his ‘property,’ as late as a year ago, but that he certainly could not do so since ‘Uncle Tom,’ Purdy, and Nebraska Bill, and the Bowery (stage) Boys, and ‘Eva’ Howard, and ‘Topsy’ Dawes, and the dramatic Aitkens, and Stevens, and the scenic artist Rogers, and Free Soil Phineas, with his compromised ‘Cabin,’ had commenced their anti-slavery campaign.

John Ball Jr., *The Liberator*, Boston, September 8, 1854. Public Domain. Reproduced from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/notices/noar02aut.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supporting Question 4 | |
| Featured Source C | **Source C:** Chart showing printing and sales figures for the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* 1851–1853 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Sales** |
| June 5, 1851 – April 1, 1852 | A serial publication in the *National Era* magazine has a circulation of about 8,000 |
| March 20, 1852 – April 1, 1852 | The first printing of 5,000 copies of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* sells out in two weeks. |
| April 2, 1852 – April 15, 1852 | The second printing of 5,000 copies of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* also sells out in two weeks. |
| May 1852 | Sales of the first edition reach 50,000 |
| September 1852 | Sales of the first edition reach 75,000 |
| October 1852 | Sales of the first edition reach 100,000 |
| Holiday season, 1852 | 3,000 copies of a special illustrated edition are sold |
| January 1853 | 30,000 copies are sold of a new “Edition for the Million” |
| February 1853 | The first foreign language version is printed in German |
| 1852 | Another 100,000 copies of a special edition printed in England are sold |
| Early, 1853 | Sales of various editions reach 310,000 |
| End of 1853 | Sales reach 1 million worldwide |

Created for the New York K-12 Social Studies Toolkit by Agate Publishing, Inc., 2015.

NOTE: Information for this chart was gathered from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/interpret/exhibits/winship/winship.html> and <http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/exhibit-highlights/2001-2005/stowe/essay2.html>.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Summative Performance Task | |
| Compelling Question | **Can words lead to war?** |
| Summative Performance Task | Can words lead to war? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, or essay) that discusses the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources, while acknowledging competing views. |

### Building an Argument

In this task, students will be asked to write a response to the compelling question using the evidence they gathered throughout the four formative performance tasks. Starting with the claim they developed in the third formative performance task and drawing on the ideas that emerged in the structured discussion, students should construct an argument that discusses the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Throughout the inquiry, students have read excerpts from the book, studied Harriet Beecher Stowe’s motivation, and analyzed reactions of people in the North and South; this information will be an essential part of a well-developed essay. Before the summative performance task, it may be helpful for students to review the sources provided and the writing/graphic organizers created during the inquiry. Doing so should help them to develop their interpretations and to highlight the appropriate examples and details to support their arguments. Having students rehearse their arguments and supporting details orally should help them succeed on the task.

Arguments in social studies are made up of claims supported by evidence, and the sophistication of the claims students develop may be an indicator of the depth of their understanding. The Evidence Chart on the next page can be used to provide students with support as they build their arguments with claims and evidence.

Students’ arguments likely will vary but could include any or all of the following claims:

* Words can lead to war when words, such as the words in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,​ help people ​to ​express their disagreements with others.
* The causes of the Civil War and most other wars are very complicated and cannot be boiled down ​​to​ words in a book such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.
* It is difficult to determine the extent to which *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* contributed to the Civil War, but the book did support abolitionism.

### Extension

This extension task calls on students to create an educational video of their argument in response to the compelling question “C​an words lead to war?” With the emergence of YouTube and other video-sharing outlets as well as easy-to-use production tools, video has become a viable medium for students to express their understanding of content. Many students​ are familiar with educational videos that present subject matter in a concise and often entertaining ​manner. Kahn Academy is well known as a provider of videos across a wide range of subjects. In social studies, John and Hank Green have developed their own form of educational videos called Crash Course. Teachers often use short educational videos to "flip the classroom," providing students with information out of class in advance of more hands-on applications in class.

For this extension, students create their own educational videos as a means of presenting their arguments. Teachers should support students as they transform their arguments into scripts and prepare storyboards for the visual presentation in the video. Given the widespread use of video in education today, providing students with an opportunity to extend their arguments through video gives them insights into the processes needed to create educational videos. Although the specific criteria may be adjusted given teachers’ needs, the following general requirements may be useful:

* Argument: All claims and evidence should be presented in the argument.
* Visual: Visual materials that represent the claims and evidence should be presented in the argument.
* Narrative: Student narration or voice-over should be included to describe the visuals.
* References: A list of citations should be provided for all of the visual materials used in the video.
* Length: The video should last 3–5 minutes.

Evidence Chart

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Initial Claim | |
| What is your opening claim? This claim should appear in the opening section of your argument. Make sure to cite your sources. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Evidence | |
| What evidence do you have from the sources you investigated to support your initial claim? Make sure to cite your sources. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Additional Claims | |
| What are some additional claims you can make that extend your initial one? Make sure to cite your sources. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Additional Evidence | |
| What additional evidence do you have from the sources you investigated that support your additional claims? Make sure to cite your sources. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Double Check | |
| What ideas from the sources contradict your claims? Have you forgotten anything? Make sure to cite your soures. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pulling It Together | |
| What is your overall understanding of the compelling question? This should be included in your conclusion. Make sure to cite your sources. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Taking Informed Action | |
| Compelling Question | **Can words lead to war?** |
| Taking Informed Action | Understand Identify and describe an issue that needs reform.  Assess Create a list of possible actions that involve words. This may include letters, editorials, social media, videos, and protests.  Act Choose one of the options and implement it as an individual, small group, or class project. |

Harriet Beecher Stowe was a reformer who used the power of the pen to change the hearts and minds of countless Americans. Words had the power to make a difference in 1852, and they still have great power today. Recent history presents numerous examples of people who exposed problems and encouraged reform by speaking out, often at great personal risk. This task involves students’ identifying a modern issue that needs reform and then planning and implementing action.

As suggested in the Staging the Compelling Question task, teachers may decide to support students’ work in the Taking Informed Action task concurrent to the inquiry. This will provide students with the opportunity to learn about how others have described a social problem as they learn about the problem of slavery through Stowe’s book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Students can then examine their motivation for investigating a current social problem, such as child labor, trafficking, or poverty while learning about Stowe’s motivation for writing her novel. As the inquiry continues and students learn about the reactions to and impact of Stowe’s book in the subsequent formative performance tasks, they may be provided with a parallel opportunity to do the same with their Taking Informed Action topic. If they chose to implement the Taking Informed Action work alongside the inquiry, teachers may use the follow chart to guide students’ work.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Inquiry | Stages of Taking Informed Action | The Staging Tasks |
| Can words lead to war? | Understand | What social problem am I investigating? |
| How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? | What do I know about this topic? |
| What led Stowe to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? | What is my motivation to study this problem? |
| How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? | Assess | How are people responding to this problem? |
| What was the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the perception of slavery? | What do I anticipate will be the reaction to my ideas? |
|  | Act | What can I do to effect change? |

To *understand*, students will participate in a brainstorming activity to identify contemporary problems in the world that need reform and to answer the question “What social problem am I investigating?” Teachers may want to have students create a brainstorming list and then share that information with a partner. They might then identify two priorities that could then be shared with the class and recorded on the board. Options might include child labor, human trafficking, domestic violence, global warming, poverty, and education. After creating the list, teachers can facilitate work on the question “What do I know about this topic?” Teachers may opt to choose one issue to look at as a class or have small groups choose an issue that interests them. Teachers may also decide to have students work individually on this component of the inquiry. Students should then do research to identify basic facts surrounding the problem and potential reforms that would improve the situation. Teachers should focus students on a goal, such as influencing policy makers, raising money to address the problem, or raising awareness about the issue. As they begin to build their understanding, teachers can move student to think about the next question, “What is my motivation to study this problem?”

To *assess* the problem, students should create a list of possible actions that involve words as they consider the question “How are people responding to this problem?” To introduce this, teachers should first focus students’ attention on the goal they have chosen. Options may include writing letters to politicians, creating a social media campaign, developing a poster or flyer, writing a newspaper editorial, or producing a documentary video. After sharing and discussing options, students should choose one to implement. The teacher has a wide variety of options in pursuing the action; a class may decide to choose one and work together to develop action. For example, a class might decide to work cooperatively to write a letter to their elected representative or create a website on an issue. Teachers may also decide to have students work in small groups, with each group responsible for implementing an action. If time allows, students might implement their own action piece. Although there are many options to choose from, a video documentary may prove to be a particularly powerful way for them to engage in the Informed Action task. Whatever option is chosen, teachers should include a discussion about the question “What do I anticipate will be the reaction to my ideas?”

* Was what we did effective?
* What could be done differently in the future?
* What impact do you think we had?

To *act*, students should implement one or more of the action ideas they developed for the issue. In the process, teachers should support students as they think about the question “What can I do to affect change?” In supporting students in taking action, teachers will need to determine the amount of time they can spend on this. If time permits, teachers may decide to work on a video that tells the story of an issue that concerns them. Although many resources are available to support video production with students, one that might lend itself to this project is the Speak Truth To Power video project (speaktruthvideo.com). This resource will provide the guidance and materials needed to implement a video project with students.

# Common Core Connections across the Grade 7 Inquiry

Social studies teachers play a key role in enabling students to develop the relevant literacy skills found in the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy. The Common Core emphasis on more robust reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language skills in general and the attention to more sophisticated source analysis, argumentation, and the use of evidence in particular are evident across the Toolkit inquiries.

Identifying the connections with the Common Core Anchor Standards will help teachers consciously build opportunities to advance their students’ literacy knowledge and expertise through the specific social studies content and practices described in the annotation. The following table outlines the opportunities represented in the Grade 7 Inquiry through illustrative examples of each of the standards represented.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Compelling Question | **Can words lead to war?** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common Core Anchor Standard Connections** | |
| Reading | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text explicitly says and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.  See Formative Performance Task 1 (p. 9): Students read excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and make inferences about Harriet Beecher Stowe’s intentions in her depiction of slavery.  CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.  See Formative Performance Task 3 (p. 24): Students read two newspaper reviews of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and determine the ideas within.  CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.  See Formative Performance Task 1 (p. 9): Students read excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and assess Stowe’s point of view in writing the book. |
| Writing | [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/1/) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.  See Formative Performance Task 3 (p. 24): Students will make a claim about differences between a Northern and Southern review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.  [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/5/) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.  See Summative Performance Task (p. 35): Students carefully develop arguments using a custom planning process. |
| Speaking and Listening | [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/SL/1/) Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.  See Formative Performance Task 4 (p. 30): Students participate in a structured debate about ways *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* affected the perception of slavery. |
| Language | [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/L/3/) Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.  See Appendix A *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Inquiry Vocabulary (p. 41): Students use the vocabulary guide to understand words and phrases they encounter in the formative performance tasks. |

Appendix A: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Inquiry Vocabulary

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Term | | Definition | |
| abolitionism | | A 19th-century movement that focused on ending the institution of slavery in the United States. | |
| antebellum | | This Latin term can be translated into “before the war” and is used to describe the period in US history before the Civil War of 1861–1865. | |
| Christian charity | | A common theme in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in which Harriet Beecher Stowe argued against southern Christians, in that Christianity and its cardinal Golden Rule condemned, rather than condoned, slavery | |
| Compromise of 1850 | | One of the most contested laws in the antebellum period that may have helped delay or provoke the Civil War. It allowed the whole state of California to be free of slavery, created slave elections in the Utah and Arizona territories, forbid slave trade in Washington, DC, and issued a new Fugitive Slave Act. | |
| fugitive slave | | A slave who attempted to run away to freedom, usually to northern states or Canada. They often ran away at night or on Sundays to escape capture with the help of others on a system known as the Underground Railroad. | |
| Fugitive Slave Act | | A part of the Compromise of 1850 that required all Americans to assist in returning fugitive slaves to their owners and punished those who did not comply. It was also known as the “Bloodhound Law” because of the dogs used in tracking down fugitive slaves. | |
| Northern and Southern press | | Newspapers and magazines in the United States that reflected unique regional political and cultural interests in their publication. | |
| slave auction | | Public events often held in Southern port cities, where enslaved Africans were put on display and sold to the highest bidders. | |
| slaveholder | | A person who owns slaves. In the United States, slaveholders practiced chattel slavery, in which slaves were seen as property instead of human beings. | |