

## The Four R's of the Abolition Movement: Rationale, Risks, Rewards... and Revolution

**WebQuest Description:** Students will research the Abolitionist movement in nineteenth century America, focusing on four topics: the rationale for the movement, the risks abolitionists took to hold their views, the rewards reaped by their persistence, and the revolution that must happen in one's mind to adopt such views.

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Curriculum:** Social Studies

**Keywords:** Abolition, Abolitionist, Slavery, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass

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### Introduction

Abolitionists were people who were opposed to slavery, wanting it to end in the United States. Much of the abolition movement had its roots in Christian religious beliefs. The earliest abolitionist group in North America, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, was formed in 1775. In 1789, Benjamin Franklin became its president. Thanks to the influence of leaders in the north, colonies there began to eliminate slavery soon after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. However, slavery increased in the south due to the expansion of lands on which to grow cotton as well as technological advancements like the cotton gin that dramatically increased the amount of cotton that could be sold. Many leaders rose up in opposition to slavery. You will be researching four of these leaders, so you can understand the rationale for their beliefs, the risks they took in holding unpopular views, the rewards they ultimately achieved, as well as the revolution they were able to create in the minds of some people who didn't agree with them at first.

### Tasks

Your job is to research the Abolition Movement in the United States through the links found on the Process page. You will need to take notes based on each of the links on the three-column graphic organizer (given out in class, and also available as a .PDF below). The three sections of your graphic organizer are Rationale (reasons why), Risks (the dangers of violence and other challenges Abolitionists faced), and Rewards (the positive consequences of the work of Abolitionists). Then, using the information you have gathered, you will take on the role of a dedicated Abolitionist in the mid-1800s. In this role, you will write a letter to a friend of yours who is undecided as to whether getting involved with the Abolitionist movement is a good idea or not, persuading them to join you. In your letter, you must address your Rationale for being an Abolitionist, explain to them using examples you have learned about of some of the Risks you and your friend may face, and assure them that the Rewards for choosing this sometimes unpopular view will be worth it in the end. If you are convincing enough, perhaps you will spark a Revolution in your friend's mind, bringing them around to your way of thinking. At the conclusion of the WebQuest, you will hand in both your graphic organizer and your letter. Extra credit will be given for going the extra mile in making your letter look like it's from the 1800's.

### Process

**Step One:** Using your Graphic Organizer, research four important members of the Abolitionist Movement and the Movement itself. Find information to support the Rationale of the Abolitionists, describe some of the Risks they faced, and recount the Rewards of their hard work. Overview of the Abolitionist Movement  
Violence Against Abolitionists  
1834 New York Anti-Abolition Riots  
Frederick Douglass - former slave and Abolitionist leader  
William Lloyd Garrison - journalist, publisher of antislavery newspaper The Liberator  
Sojourner Truth - escaped slave, antislavery and women's rights activist  
Harriet Tubman - former slave who led daring escapes of hundreds of runaway slaves via the Underground Railroad  
**Step Two:** Using the information you gathered on your graphic organizer, pretend that you are a very committed Abolitionist living in the mid-1800s. Your friend, aware of the unpopularity of the cause and the risks involved, is not sure if they want to join the movement. Write a letter to your friend, persuading them to join the movement. Cite specific examples from your research. Be sure that you clearly explain your rationale for being an Abolitionist, that you frankly describe the risks your friend may face for joining the movement, and, lastly, make sure they know of the great rewards that they can expect from joining this important movement. If you are truly persuasive, your friend may just experience a revolution in their thinking, and join with you in making history.

### Conclusion

It has been said "Every Age has its Evils, Every Age has its Abolitionists." Consider for yourself: are you the kind of person who is willing to stand up for those in need? Are you willing to let your voice be heard? Are you willing to help those who need it most? Complete the following Quick Write on your own paper: What issue of injustice in the world today upsets you the most? What would be your rationale for fighting against it? What risks might you face? What rewards might be seen from taking this position? And what kind of revolution (personal, local, national, worldwide) might you be a part of?

## Teacher Page

Greetings, fellow educators! I created this WebQuest out of the frustration I felt regarding the seeming lack of available lessons on the Abolition Movement that would really engage students. It is my hope that by having students take on the personae of Abolitionists themselves, they will be able to understand better the rationale, risks, and rewards that came with the territory, and also bring about a personal revolution in their own thinking about how to respond personally to incendiary topics in their daily lives.

### Standards

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### Credits

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### Other

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