

In-depth resources

2. Douglass' Moral Argument against Slavery vs. Calhoun's Structural, Legalistic Argument for States' Rights

- Excerpt from “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” a speech by Frederick Douglass, at Rochester, New York, July 5th, 1852.
- Excerpt from “The Southern Address,” a manifesto written by John C. Calhoun in 1849, signed by 48 members of Congress.

Textbook connections:

Call to Freedom, pp. 472 -474, 477, 553, 590, 614, and 631. Included pp. 552-553.
The Americans, pp. 154, 159, 164 – 166, and 181. Included p. 164-165.

Background:

On the excerpts:

Both Douglass and Calhoun

- are speaking/writing for a like-minded audience
- want their audience to become more militant
- are using a reasoned, persuasive argument to get their point across

Douglass: a speech, written and thus more easily understood

Calhoun: written as a public declaration of policy

Suggested curriculum uses:

A. Douglass

1. Use text analysis to understand Douglass' argument for the existence of inconsistencies between what Americans say and do and the reality for American slaves.
2. Use the text excerpt and the student chart to examine the sets of inconsistencies. Go over the content questions students will be asked to answer in written form at the conclusion.
3. Begin by doing the first and second together, have students do the third by themselves and check for understanding. Have students continue to finish the chart alone or in partners. Discuss the pieces of the argument, explaining vocabulary words and historical references as needed, e.g. tyrants of Russia and Austria, anathemas. Have the students answer the content questions in complete sentences and discuss.
4. Additionally, discussing the role of the bolded connectors will help students recognize the elements of making an argument.

Content questions:

1. According to Douglass who supports slavery in America?
2. Does Douglass believe Christians are inconsistent? Why or why not?
3. How has Douglass structured his argument? Why would this be effective?

B. Calhoun

The complete text of Calhoun's Southern Address can be found at <http://alpha.furman.edu/~benenson/docs/calhoun.htm>

Calhoun's Southern Address arguments for paragraphs 23 and 24 are as follows:

Argument for Paragraph 23

1. The Federal Government cannot favor one state over another.
2. If the Government discriminated between the domestic institutions of states it would violate its purpose for being: to provide common protection and guard all.
3. We do not ask for special favors or treatment, we ask for the same rights as others: to be allowed to immigrate freely with our property into the U.S. territories.

Argument for Paragraph 24

1. The South sacrificed more to acquire Mexico and California in the Mexican War than the North did by furnishing three times the number of volunteers to fight the war.
 2. We have a Federal Government in which States as distinct sovereign communities, not individuals, are the constituents.
 3. The territories belong to the constituents (the States) equally as joint owners.
 4. The South cannot be deprived of their fair share in the territories.
1. Use the referrer activity and content questions to access Calhoun's States' Rights argument in paragraph 23. Discuss the argument as students decode the meaning by clearly understanding the players. Do a few together at first, have students do one on their own, and then assign the remainder to students individually or in partners. If students haven't done this before, partner work is a good way to start. After going over the referrals together, have students answer the content questions in complete sentences and discuss.

Content questions:

1. Does the Federal Government have the right to extend or restrict slavery or establish or abolish slavery?
 2. According to Calhoun and the Southern Address, how should the Federal Government treat the states?
 3. According to Calhoun and the Southern Address, why was the Federal Government established?
 4. Who should decide whether slavery should continue or be abolished?
 5. Applying the States' Rights argument, what right was the South fighting for regarding their slaves? (This is found at the very end of paragraph 23.)
2. Paragraph 24 gives Calhoun's argument, with statistics, for the contributions of the South during the Mexican American War. Teachers can develop comprehension activities for this.

Background Context

“The Southern Address,” a manifesto written by John C. Calhoun in 1849, signed by 48 members of Congress.

By the end of 1849, nearly 100,000 migrants had flocked west to search for gold in the hills of California. The massive influx of newcomers created a situation of lawlessness and near anarchy. Seeking order and stability, a convention wrote a constitution and petitioned the federal government for statehood. President Zachary Taylor was receptive to the idea, and encouraged Congress to speedily accept California as a state of the union. One of the provisions of the California constitution, however, declared that “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude ... shall ever be tolerated in this state.” The admission of a free state to the union would upset the balance between free and slave states in the Senate, so Southerners began organizing against the proposal.

With “The Southern Address,” Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina attempted to mobilize Southern members of Congress across party lines into a single voting bloc. The manifesto was signed by 48 Congressmen from 12 different states. In this excerpt, Calhoun argues that the Constitution is a “compact” between sovereign states and explicitly ties the doctrine of states’ right to the defense of slavery. In the second paragraph, he enunciates a Southern white vision of emancipation that remained powerful even through secession and Reconstruction.

“The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” a speech by Frederick Douglass, at Rochester, New York, July 5th, 1852.

In antebellum America, the Fourth of July was a major holiday. Orators praised the nation and described the American Revolution as the starting moment of a new and promising phase in the history of the world. In this excerpt from a speech in Rochester, Frederick Douglass points out the inconsistencies between the promise of the American Republic and the slavery practiced in the South. In so doing, he claims the legacy of the American Revolution for the abolitionist cause. During the early nineteenth century, upstate New York was a hotbed of religious revivalism, radicalism, and communitarian experimentation; the region was given the nickname of the “Burnt-over District” because of the waves of fiery movements it had experienced. Rochester in particular was a center of abolitionist sentiment.

From “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” a speech by
Frederick Douglass, at Rochester, New York, July 5th, 1852.

Americans! Your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three million of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere *tools* and *body-guards* of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot, and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty... You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the

storm of British artillery to throw off a three-penny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe “that of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth,” and hath commanded all men everywhere, to love one another; yet you notoriously hate (and glory in your hatred) all men whose skins are not colored you’re your own. You declare before the world, and are understood by the world to declare that you “*hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*”; and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, “*is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,*” a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens, I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie... It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*...

John C. Calhoun's Southern Address
A manifesto written in 1849 and signed by 48 Congressmen
(Excerpt from twelve pages)

[Paragraph 23]

...we hold that the Federal Government has no right to extend or restrict slavery, no more than to establish or abolish it; nor has it any right whatever to distinguish between the domestic institutions of one State, or section, and another, in order to favor one and discourage the other. As the federal representative of each and all the States, it is bound to deal out, within the sphere of its powers, equal and exact justice and favor to all. To act otherwise, to undertake to discriminate between the domestic institutions of one and another, would be to act in total subversion of the end for which it was established--to be the common protection and guardian of all.

Entertaining these opinions, we ask not, as the North alleges we do, for the extension of slavery. That would make a discrimination in our favor, as unjust and unconstitutional as the discrimination they ask against us in their favor. It is not for them, nor for the Federal Government to determine, whether our domestic institution is good or bad; or whether it should be repressed or preserved. It belongs to us, and us only, to decide such questions. What then we do insist on, is, not to extend slavery, but that we shall not be prohibited from immigrating with our property, into the Territories of the United States, because we are slaveholders; or, in other

words, that we shall not on that account be disfranchised of a privilege possessed by all others, citizens and foreigners, without discrimination as to character, profession, or color. All, whether savage, barbarian, or civilized, may freely enter and remain, we only being excluded.

[paragraph 24]

We rest our claim, not only on the high grounds above stated, but also on the solid foundation of right, justice, and equality. The territories immediately in controversy--New Mexico and California--were acquired by the common sacrifice and efforts of all the States, towards which the South contributed far more than her full share of men,*

[Total number of volunteers from the South

-Regiments- 33

-Battalions- 14

-Companies- 120

Total number of volunteers from the South 45,640

Total number of volunteers from the North

-Regiments- 22

-Battalions- 2

-Companies- 12

Total number of volunteers from the North 23,084

Being nearly two on the part of the South to one on the part of the North. But taking into consideration that the population of the North is two thirds greater than the South, the latter has furnished more than three times her due proportion of volunteers.] to say nothing of money, and is, of course, on every principle of right, justice, fairness and equality, entitled to participate fully in the benefits to be derived from their acquisition. But as impregnable as is this ground, there is another not less so. Ours is a Federal Government--a Government in which not individuals, but States as distinct sovereign communities, are the constituents. To them, as members of the Federal Union, the territories belong; and they are hence declared to be territories belonging to the United States. The States, then, are the joint owners. Now it is conceded by all writers on the subject, that in all such Governments their members are all equal--equal in rights and equal in dignity. They also concede that this equality constitutes the basis of such Government, and that it cannot be destroyed without changing their nature and character. To deprive, then, the Southern States and their citizens of their full share in territories declared to belong to them, in common with the other States, would be in derogation of the equality belonging to them as members of a Federal Union, and

sink them, from being equals, into a subordinate and dependent condition. Such are the solid and impregnable grounds on which we rest our demand to an equal participation in the territories.

Calhoun's Argument for State's Rights

Instructions: Draw an arrow from the indefinite word(s) in italics to the definite word(s) referenced. The first word, "we" refers to the author and the undersigned (those who signed the Southern Address.)

We hold that the Federal Government has no right to extend or restrict slavery, no more than to establish or abolish *it*; nor has *it* any right whatever to distinguish between the domestic institutions of one State, or section, and *another*, in order to favor *one* and discourage *the other*.

As the federal representative of each and all the States, *it* is bound to deal out, within the sphere of *its* powers, equal and exact justice and favor to *all*.

To act otherwise, to undertake to discriminate between the domestic institutions of *one* and *another*, would be to act in total subversion of the end for which *it* was established--to be the common protection and guardian of *all*. Entertaining *these opinions*, *we* ask not, as the North alleges *we* do, for the extension of slavery. *That* would make a discrimination in our favor, as unjust and unconstitutional as the discrimination *they* ask against *us* in *their* favor. It is not for *them*, nor for the Federal Government to determine, whether *our domestic institution* is good or bad; or whether *it* should be repressed or preserved. It belongs to *us*, and *us only*, to decide such questions.

KEY

Calhoun's Argument for State's Rights

Instructions: Draw an arrow from the indefinite word(s) in italics to the definite word(s) referenced. The first word, "we" refers to the author and the undersigned (those who signed the Southern Address.)

Those who signed the Southern Address

We hold that the Federal Government has no right to extend or restrict slavery, no more

than to establish or abolish *it*; nor has *it* any right whatever to distinguish between the domestic institutions of one State, or section, and *another*, in order to favor *one* and discourage *the other*.

As the federal representative of each and all the States, *it* is bound to deal out, within the

sphere of *its* powers, equal and exact justice and favor to *all*. To act otherwise, to undertake to discriminate between the domestic institutions of *one* and *another* would be

to act in total subversion of the end for which *it* was established--to be the common

protection and guardian of *all*. Entertaining *these opinions* *we* ask not, as the North

alleges *we* do, for the extension of slavery. *That* would make a discrimination in our

favor, as unjust and unconstitutional as the discrimination *they* ask against *us* in *their*

favor. It is not for *them*, nor for the Federal Government to determine, whether *our*

domestic institution is good or bad; or whether *it* should be repressed or preserved. It

belongs to *us*, and *us only*, to decide such questions.

us = South
us and us only = South and southern states

