

History in Beloved Answer Key

Fugitive Slave Act (1850)

- What was the Fugitive Slave Act, and why was it controversial?

It was a federal law requiring escaped enslaved people to be returned to their enslavers, even if they were living in free states. It was controversial because it forced free states to enforce slavery and denied fugitives basic legal rights, like a jury trial.

- How did it affect enslaved people who escaped to free states?

It made freedom uncertain—anyone could be captured and claimed as a fugitive. Escaped enslaved people often had to flee farther north into Canada for safety.

- How did communities (Black and white) respond to the law?

Black communities organized resistance, helping fugitives hide or escape through networks like the Underground Railroad. Many abolitionists openly defied the law, while pro-slavery supporters demanded strict enforcement.

Reconstruction (1865–1877)

- What were the main goals of Reconstruction?

To reunite the Union, rebuild the South, and secure rights for newly freed African Americans, including legal equality, citizenship, and voting rights.

- What challenges did freed African Americans face during this period?

They faced violence and intimidation from groups like the Ku Klux Klan, discriminatory laws like Black Codes, lack of land or economic independence, and systemic racism.

- How did Reconstruction shape ideas of freedom, citizenship, and community?

It broadened the definition of American citizenship through the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. It also emphasized the need for equal rights, though these promises were undermined by continued racism and segregation after Reconstruction ended.