

# Can Words Lead to War?



Full-page illustration from first edition *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Hammatt Billings. Available through *Uncle Tom's Cabin & American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive*.

## 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?

## Middle School *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Inquiry

Can Words Lead to War?	
<b>Framework for Teaching American Slavery</b>	<b>Summary Objective 12:</b> Students will understand the growth of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s and slaveholding states' view of the movement as a physical, economic and political threat.
<b>Staging the Question</b>	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 <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?	What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?	How did people in the North and South react to <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?	How did <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> affect abolitionism?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Complete a source analysis chart to write a summary of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> that includes main ideas and supporting details from Stowe's description of slavery in the book.	List four quotes from the sources that point to Stowe's motivation and write a paragraph explaining her motivation.	Make a T-chart comparing the viewpoints expressed in northern and southern newspaper reviews of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and make a claim about the differences.	Participate in a structured discussion regarding the impact <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> had on abolitionism.
Featured Source	Featured Source	Featured Source	Featured Source
<b>Source A:</b> "Uncle Tom's Cabin Synopsis," adapted from the website of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (2017). <b>Source B:</b> <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpt (1852). <b>Source C:</b> Illustrations from <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , by Hammatt Billings (1852).	<b>Source A:</b> Concluding remarks to <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpt (1852). <b>Source B:</b> Letter to Lord Thomas Denman from Harriet Beecher Stowe (1853).	<b>Source A:</b> Review of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in <i>The Morning Post</i> (1852). <b>Source B:</b> Review of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in <i>Southern Press</i> (1852).	<b>Source A:</b> "Freedom National; Slavery Sectional," speech by Charles Sumner, Excerpt (1852). <b>Source B:</b> "A Journey to Charleston," by John Ball Jr., Excerpt (1854). <b>Source C:</b> "Publication and Sales of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , 1851–1853," chart by Agate Publishing (2015).

<b>Summative Performance Task</b>	<b>ARGUMENT</b> Can words lead to war? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster or essay) that discusses addresses the compelling question while using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing views.
	<b>EXTENSION</b> Create an educational video of your argument responding to the compelling question "Can words lead to war?"
<b>Taking Informed Action</b>	<b>UNDERSTAND</b> Identify and describe a human rights issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., child labor, trafficking or poverty). <b>ASSESS</b> Create a list of possible ways to address this issue using words. This may include letters, editorials, social media, videos and protests. <b>ACT</b> 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*. The power of language is often discussed with students in the context of using words to injure. This query asks students to consider the power of words to enact reform. Students will investigate historical sources related to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to address the compelling question: "Can words lead to war?" The final summative assessment asks them to make an argument about the impact of the novel.

The inquiry opens with a staging activity in which students consider the power of words in their home, school, community, nation and world. The focus then shifts to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Students will explore Stowe's motivation for writing the novel as well as reactions from northern and southern readers.

The initial formative performance task is centered on the text. Students will write a summary of the plot and analyze excerpts and illustrations to better understand how Stowe used emotional language to describe slavery and convey her abolitionist message. The second task provides students with an opportunity to consider how the Fugitive Slave Act, along with other events, inspired Stowe to write her novel. Students will examine excerpts from Stowe's correspondence and from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which she explains what led her to write the novel. The third formative performance task shifts to an examination of reactions to the novel. Students will read two reviews written when the novel was published, one supportive and the other critical. The fourth formative performance task deals with the book's impact on abolitionism, asking students to examine two 19th-century accounts of that impact as well as a sales chart for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Stowe sought to bring attention to the enslavement of African Americans through her portrayal of Uncle Tom, Eliza and George, but these stereotypical characters also reinforced racist sentiment. You 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 you may select sources produced by African Americans from the antebellum period who sought the same goal as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For example, you may use selections from Frederick Douglass' 1855 book *My Bondage and My Freedom* or Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, available through the University of North Carolina's project Documenting the American South. These writers provide powerful voices from African-American perspectives, and they support teachers committed to culturally responsive practice.

It is important to note that this inquiry will require prerequisite knowledge of historical events and ideas. You will want your students to have already studied slavery, tensions between the North and South and abolitionism. You should also present students with background information on Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; some background is provided in the inquiry's "Content Background" section.

### Structure of the Inquiry

---

In addressing the compelling question, "Can Words Lead to War?" students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence and counterevidence from a variety of sources.



## Length of the Inquiry

---

This inquiry is designed to take five to seven 40-minute class periods. Inquiries are not scripts, so you are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of your students. The inquiry time frame could expand if you think your students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks and featured sources). Resources should be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 enslaved people, became an abolitionist after interacting with people who escaped from slavery 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 enslaved people who had escaped and imposed stiff penalties for persons who assisted them. Those who were captured were tried before a special commissioner. The law also eliminated basic constitutional rights for people who had escaped slavery 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 fugitives and released them. Stowe, outraged by this law, began hiding people escaping from slavery in her home while she and her husband Calvin were living in Maine. 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 enslaved man who encountered great hardship.

*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 best-seller: 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 popular and widely available. One 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> You will want to be familiar with Abraham Lincoln's shifting views concerning race, slavery and emancipation throughout his public life, so as to not present him in a singular light. One suggested resource is Eric Foner's *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. New York: Norton, 2010.

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 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 the United States 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 people as happy and as better off than their free black 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 popular 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. There is no doubt, however, 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 enslaved characters.

## Staging the Compelling Question: Can words lead to war?

Compelling Question	Can words lead to war?
Featured Source	"Kailash Satyarthi, Freeing Children" student video by Jocelyn Jenis and Lauryn Watkins (2015)

**THIS INQUIRY OPENS WITH THE QUESTION**, "Can words lead to war?" You can start by asking students to consider this quote from Stowe's contemporary 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

Stowe certainly knew how to combine words, and in this inquiry students will carefully consider the power of her language. To get students thinking about why words matter, you might begin by asking them to list some different ways that we communicate today. Answers will likely include things like formal and informal speaking, writing and participating in social media. Continue the discussion by asking students to consider the most common audiences for their own words—who do they most often reach with their speech? Who might they reach, if they tried?

The question of audience can lead students to think about the power of their own speech. You can reinforce this understanding by asking students to draw on personal experience; you might consider having them think back on times they've used language to both positive and negative effect, to hurt someone, for example, or to push back against injustice. After reflecting, they can discuss some key questions, like:

- 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?

The video "Kailash Satyarthi, Freeing Children," provides students with a great example of ways their peers have spoken out to create positive change. Produced by middle school students in New York, the video describes the work of activist and 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi and his efforts to end child labor.

You might save the video until you introduce the final tasks. Or you may decide to use it to stage the compelling question. If you do open the inquiry with the video, then consider asking students to take informed action as they move through the inquiry. Organizing the project in this way provides students with the opportunity to learn about how others have described a contemporary social problem at the same time as they learn about how Stowe described the problem of slavery—and the effect of her description on the nation.

## Staging the Compelling Question: Can Words Lead to War?

### Featured Source

“Kailash Satyarthi, Freeing Children” student video by Jocelyn Jenis and Lauryn Watkins (2015). Available through the [Speak Truth to Power Student Video Contest](#) website.

*Introduction: This video about Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi, produced by seventh-grade students in New York, was the third-place winner of the nonprofit Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights’ video contest. The contest, “Speak Truth to Power,” encourages middle and high school students to engage with human rights issues through video production. Students choose an issue and an activist identified by Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and create a three- to five-minute video that introduces the activist, explains the issue, and connects the issue to the student filmmakers’ local communities. Students also reflect on the larger lessons that viewers can draw from the life of their activist, and offer suggestions for how viewers can work to address their chosen issue.*

## Supporting Question 1: How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?

<b>Supporting Question</b>	How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	Complete a source analysis chart to write a summary of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> that includes main ideas and supporting details from Stowe's description of slavery in the book.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<p><b>Source A:</b> <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> Synopsis, adapted from the website of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (2017).</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpts (1852).</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> Illustrations from <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Hammatt Billings (1852).</p>

**THE FIRST SUPPORTING QUESTION**—“How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?”—asks students to read and analyze a summary of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* along with selections from the novel. Students will also analyze illustrations from the first edition to understand how slavery was represented in Stowe's book. By considering this question, students will learn more about the experience of slavery in the United States and how it affected a range of people in the North and the South, enslaved and free.

**FEATURED SOURCE A** is a brief summary of the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The book follows the stories of Tom and Eliza, both of whom escape after their enslaver sells Eliza's son Harry and her husband George, along with Tom himself, to pay off debts. The summary includes general information about the plot and provides brief introductions to the book's main characters.

**FEATURED SOURCE B** includes four excerpts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The first exemplifies the hopelessness of many of the enslaved persons depicted in the book. In this selection, George speaks with Eliza about his cruel enslaver. 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.

In the second excerpt, Stowe illustrates the ways that the institution of slavery breaks up families. After learning that her enslaver is planning to sell their son Harry to an unscrupulous slaver, Eliza takes her son and runs away, crossing the frozen Ohio River. In this passage, Eliza is speaking with a friendly white woman in Ohio who has taken her in after she escaped.

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

The fourth excerpt is Stowe's description of a slaver's auction. At the auction house, Uncle Tom is sold to a cruel man named Simon Legree. Stowe returns to the idea of slavery breaking up families in this passage: An enslaved woman named Susan is separated from her daughter, Emmeline, when they are sold to different enslavers.



**FEATURED SOURCE C** includes two illustrations from the first edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The first depicts the moment when Eliza finds out that her son Harry and her friend Uncle Tom have been sold to an enslaver and trader, the event that prompts her escape (see source B, excerpt 1). The second illustration shows the slaver's auction described in Featured Source B, excerpt 4.

**THE FIRST FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK** calls on students to write a summary of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that includes main ideas and supporting details from Harriet Beecher Stowe's description of slavery. A brief overview of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* included in the sources for this task introduces students to the basic plot and characters. Although students would have to read the entire book to understand the many complex characters, this synopsis will help them better understand Stowe's approach to describing slavery and the ways Stowe appealed to emotion with her rich description of the characters and the conditions they faced.

This formative performance task is an important step toward completing the inquiry 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 they'll encounter in later featured sources.

**APPENDIX A** includes a Source Analysis Chart that students can use to better understand selected passages and illustrations from the book.

## Supporting Question 1: How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?

### Featured Source

**Source A:** “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Synopsis,” adapted from the website of the [Harriet Beecher Stowe Center](#) (2017).

*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 Harry’s mother Eliza, an intelligent and brave enslaved woman.

When the novel begins, Eliza’s husband George, unaware of Harry’s danger, has already escaped. His plan was to purchase his family’s freedom later. But after overhearing that her enslaver, Mr. Shelby, is planning to sell Tom and Harry to a man who trades in enslaved men and women, 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.

To protect his family, who might be sold in his place, Tom decides not to run away. 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; Eva’s father, the charming, elegant, but passive Augustine St. Clare; and 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 enslaver, has Tom whipped to death for refusing to deny his faith or betray the hiding place of two fugitive women.

Used with permission from the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center.

## Supporting Question 1: How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?

### Featured Source

**Source B:** *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpts. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852.

### PASSAGE 1

*Introduction: In this excerpt from Chapter three, George Harris is speaking with his wife, Eliza, about his cruel enslaver. After enduring abuse, George eventually escapes.*

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’ve 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!”

## PASSAGE 2

*Introduction: In this excerpt from Chapter nine, Eliza has escaped from slavery and is speaking with a friendly white woman who has taken her in after she escaped and crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky into the free state of Ohio. Eliza flees after finding out that her enslaver is going to sell her son, Harry, to an unscrupulous 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!”

## PASSAGE 3

*Introduction: In this excerpt from Chapter 19, an enslaver 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!”

#### PASSAGE 4

*Introduction: In this excerpt from Chapter 30, set at an auction house, Uncle Tom is sold to a cruel enslaver named Simon Legree. Susan, an enslaved woman, is separated from her daughter Emmeline when they are sold to different enslavers.*

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.

## Supporting Question 1: How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery?

### Featured Source

**Source C:** Illustrations from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Hammatt Billings (1852). Available through [Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive](#), directed by Stephen Railton.

### IMAGE 1

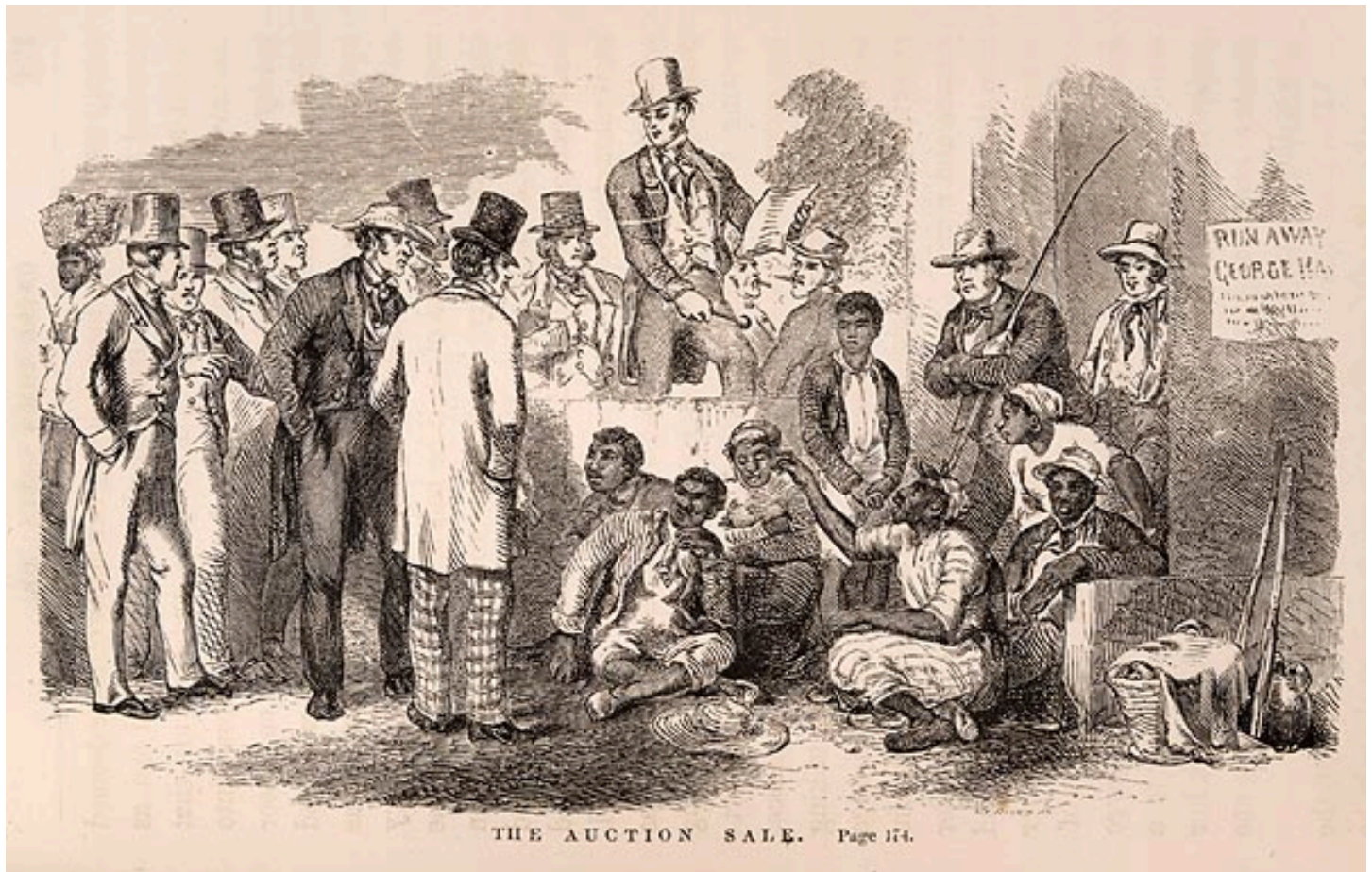
*Introduction: In this illustration, Eliza comes to tell Uncle Tom and his wife that Tom and Harry have been sold to a man who trades in enslaved people. Eliza has just overheard her enslaver, Mr. Shelby, saying that the trader will arrive in the morning to take them away. In a panic, Eliza plans to run away that night.*





## IMAGE 2

Introduction: *This illustration from the first edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin shows a slaver's auction featuring several characters from the book, including the auctioneer, Hagar, Albert, Haley and other enslaved people and enslavers.*



## Supporting Question 2: What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

<b>Supporting Question</b>	What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	List four quotes in the sources that point to Stowe's motivation and write a paragraph explaining her motivation.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<p><b>Source A:</b> Concluding remarks to <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpt (1852).</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> Letter to Lord Denman from Harriet Beecher Stowe (1853).</p>

**THE SECOND SUPPORTING QUESTION**—“What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?”—asks students to consider the reasons Stowe chose to write an anti-slavery novel. Analyzing the sources, students see that Stowe's motivation originated in her Christian faith and a personal need to speak out for the oppressed. The supporting question also asks students to consider the events and policies of the time that moved Stowe to write, including the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act.

**FEATURED SOURCE A** is a selection from the conclusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Writing in the third person, Stowe explains why she wrote her novel. In this passage, Stowe points to the Compromise of 1850, and particularly the Fugitive Slave Act, as significant motivators. Christianity is a common theme in Stowe's writing, and she mentions it several times in Featured Source A.

**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 and an important judge in England and Wales. In the letter, Stowe again explains her motivation for writing the book, describing the injustice of slavery and her need to speak for those who have no voice. Featured Source B includes both an excerpt of the letter and a reprint of the letter in its entirety; please choose the option that seems best suited to your class.

**THE SECOND FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK** requires students to read and analyze the featured sources. Considering the difficulty of the sources, you may need to provide the opportunity for students to define difficult words and carefully guide them through the sources using a close-reading strategy.

After reading the two sources, students should select four quotes that they believe explain Stowe's motivations for writing and then translate those quotes into their own words. Using both Stowe's words and their own, students should write a paragraph explaining her motivation.

**APPENDIX B** includes an Organizing Quotes Chart to support students in this work.

## Supporting Question 2: What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

### Featured Source

**Source A:** Concluding remarks to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Excerpt. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852.

*Introduction: In this excerpt from Chapter 45 ("Concluding Remarks"), Stowe writes in the third person. Referring to herself as "the author," she addresses the question of whether the novel tells a true story and explains why and how she decided to write it.*

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.

## Supporting Question 2: What led Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

### Featured Source

**Source B:** Letter to Lord Thomas Denman from Harriet Beecher Stowe (1853). Available in MS form in the Huntington Library.

### PASSAGE 1

*Introduction: Below is an excerpt from Harriet Beecher Stowe's January 20, 1853 letter to Lord Thomas Denman. Denman had published several reviews of Uncle Tom's Cabin in the newspaper The London Evening Standard the year before, and in this 1853 letter, Stowe responds both to his writing on her novel and to his work as a British abolitionist and judge. She also explains her motivation for writing Uncle Tom's Cabin. This letter has not yet been reprinted, but it is available for historians to study at The Huntington Library in California.*

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.

### PASSAGE 2

*Introduction: Below is the full text of Stowe's January 20, 1853 letter to Lord Thomas Denman. The letter is available in manuscript form at the Huntington Library.*

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



## Supporting Question 3: How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

<b>Supporting Question</b>	How did people in the North and the South react to <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	Make a T-chart comparing viewpoints expressed in newspaper reviews of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and make a claim about the differences.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Source A:</b> Review of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in <i>The Morning Post</i> (1852). <b>Source B:</b> Review of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in <i>Southern Press</i> (1852).

**THE THIRD SUPPORTING QUESTION**—“How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?”—asks students to consider reader response. Hundreds of reviews and articles on the book were written in the years following its publication, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* soon became a best-seller, with sales outpacing all other publications of the time except for the Bible. By analyzing different views, students will begin to get a sense of the reception to a novel that had a powerful impact on public opinion in both the North and the South.

**FEATURED SOURCE A** is drawn from a review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in the Boston newspaper *The Morning Post*. The author of the review, identified only as W.B.S., describes the novel in glowing terms and acknowledges the personal, emotional tone Harriet Beecher Stowe uses to develop the story, stating, “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 enslaver, as an example. In analyzing this source, students begin to understand the strong positive reactions to the book that developed across much of the North.

**FEATURED SOURCE B** is an unsigned review published in the *Southern Press* 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.” In analyzing this source, students will begin to understand the strong negative reactions to the book that emerged throughout the South.

**THE THIRD FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK** requires students to analyze the two reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to compare the viewpoints expressed in the newspapers. Some students may need assistance reading the passages. In such cases, you might read aloud or pair good readers with students who have a more difficult time reading.

Students should reflect on the following questions to complete a graphic organizer comparing the viewpoints:

- 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 finish their graphic organizer, students will write a claim about the differences between the two reviews.

To support students as they construct their claims, you might ask them to choose one word that exemplifies each reviewer's attitude toward Stowe or toward *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 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 Morning Post* described Harriet Beecher Stowe as a **genius**." Students can then choose a quote that goes along with their word. For example: "[Stowe's novel is] 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 Morning Post* describe Harriet Beecher Stowe as a **genius**?" By posing an answer to their question and using the quote, they have created a claim with evidence. For example: "*The 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, Pennsylvania's Shenandoah Valley was home to strong proslavery sentiment, and Quaker abolitionists were a powerful force in western North Carolina.

**APPENDIX C** includes a graphic organizer that can help students with this task, a T-Chart for Analyzing Reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

## Supporting Question 3: How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

### Featured Source

**Source A:** [Review of \*Uncle Tom's Cabin\* in \*The Morning Post\*, May 3, 1852](#). Available through [Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive](#).

*Introduction: The following is an excerpt of a review of Uncle Tom's Cabin written by W.B.S. and published in The Morning Post in Boston, Massachusetts, on May 3, 1852—shortly after the Stowe's novel was published. The Morning Post (later known as The Boston Post) was one of the most popular daily newspapers in New England at the time.*

“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, &c. 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.

### Supporting Question 3: How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

#### Featured Source

**Source B:** [Review of \*Uncle Tom's Cabin\*](#) by an unknown author. *Southern Press*, 1852. Reproduced from *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive*.

*Introduction: The following is an excerpt of a review of Uncle Tom's Cabin published in Southern Press. The article is untitled, and the author is unknown. Southern Press was a short-lived newspaper published in Washington, DC, between 1850 and 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.

## Supporting Question 4: What was the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on abolitionism?

<b>Supporting Question</b>	What was the impact of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> on abolitionism?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	Participate in a structured discussion regarding the impact <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> had on abolitionism.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<p><b>Source A:</b> "Freedom National; Slavery Sectional" speech by Charles Sumner, Excerpt (1852).</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> "A Journey to Charleston," by John Ball Jr., Excerpt (1854).</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> "Publication and Sales of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>, 1851–1853," chart by Agate Publishing (2015).</p>

**THE FOURTH SUPPORTING QUESTION**—"What was the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on abolitionism?"—asks students to consider the practical effects of Stowe's words on the debate over slavery in the United States. Now that students have examined a few of the written and visual depictions of slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the letter and passage in which Stowe explains her motivations for writing, and two examples of the novel's reception in the North and the South, they can look more closely at the impact *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had on the public perception of slavery. The sources for this formative performance task offer a glimpse at how contemporary readers understood the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the abolitionist movement. While some Southerners' attitudes supporting slavery may have hardened in response to the novel, its greatest impact was mostly among northern readers who had been neutral on the issue or perhaps slightly sympathetic to the abolitionist cause before reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**FEATURED SOURCE A** is an excerpt from a speech given by Charles Sumner on the floor of the U.S. Senate explaining his motion to repeal the Fugitive Slave Act. Analyzing this source, students will understand how one influential U.S. politician viewed the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**FEATURED SOURCE B** is from a letter by British abolitionist and journalist James Redpath (under the pen name John Ball Jr.) discussing the Fugitive Slave Act. He argues that the abduction and re-enslavement of those who moved to the North to escape slavery was nearly impossible after the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This source provides one example of how attitudes toward slavery changed in the North in the period following the publication of Stowe's novel.

**FEATURED SOURCE C** is a 2015 chart that shows the sales of different editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the first two years of its publication. The book was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and trailed only the Bible in overall sales.

**THE FOURTH FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK** asks students to use the knowledge they have gained from these sources and the featured sources throughout the inquiry to participate in a structured discussion of how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may have affected abolitionism.

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 might include questions like

- 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 that surprised you 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?

## Supporting Question 4: What was the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on abolitionism?

### Featured Source

**Source A:** “[Freedom National; Slavery Sectional](#)” by Charles Sumner, Excerpt (1852). Available through *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive*.

*Introduction: In this speech, Senator Charles Sumner tried to persuade his fellow lawmakers to repeal the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Delivered August 26, 1852, the speech was Sumner's first before the Senate. He went on to become a major voice for abolition. Although Sumner's speech failed to persuade his fellow senators, it was reprinted and sold in Boston.*

### 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 [the 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.

## Supporting Question 4: What was the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on abolitionism?

### Featured Source B

**Source B:** “[A Journey to Charleston, No. IV,](#)” by John Ball Jr., Excerpt (1854). Accessible through *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive*.

*Introduction: John Ball Jr. was a pseudonym for James Redpath, a British-born abolitionist journalist and agitator. 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 enslaved people throughout the South and introduced northern abolitionist ideas to the Southern press. Near the end of the passage, he discusses stage versions of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Combining the names of the characters with the actors who played them, Ball shows how famous the play has become.*

### 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 Law 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.

## Supporting Question 4: What was the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on abolitionism?

### Featured Source C

**Source C:** “Publication and Sales of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1851–1853,” created by Agate Publishing (2015).

*Introduction: This chart details the publication and sales history of Uncle Tom’s Cabin from the first publication, printed as a serial in the National Era magazine in June of 1851, to the one millionth copy, printed in late 1853. The data represented here are drawn from [Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-Media Archive](#) and “[Aspects of the Publishing History of Uncle Tom’s Cabin](#)” By Ronald D. Patkus and Mary C. Schlosser.*

Date	Sales
June 5, 1851–April 1, 1852	A serial publication in the <i>National Era</i> magazine has a circulation of about 8,000.
March 20, 1852–April 1, 1852	The first printing of 5,000 copies of <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> sells out in two weeks.
April 2, 1852–April 15, 1852	The second printing of 5,000 copies of <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> 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.

## Summative Performance Task

### Compelling Question

Can words lead to war?

### ARGUMENT

By this point, students have read excerpts from the novel, studied Stowe's accounts of her motivation for writing and analyzed reactions of people in the North and South. Before starting the summative performance task, it may be helpful for students to review the sources and the writing/graphic organizers they have created. Doing so will help them develop interpretations and identify and highlight appropriate examples and details to support their arguments.

In the summative performance task, students are asked to write a response to the compelling question using evidence they gathered completing the formative performance tasks. Having students rehearse their arguments and supporting details aloud may help them succeed. Students' arguments likely will vary but could include any or all of the following claims:

- Words can lead to war when words, such as those 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 "Can words lead to war?" You should support students as they transform their arguments into scripts and prepare storyboards for the visual presentation in the video. Although the specific criteria may be adjusted, the following student guidelines 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 three to five minutes.

**APPENDIX D** includes an Evidence Chart that can be used to provide students with support as they build their arguments.

## Taking Informed Action

<b>Compelling Question</b>	<b>Can words lead to war?</b>
<b>Taking Informed Action</b>	<p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> Identify and describe an issue that needs reform.</p> <p><b>ASSESS</b> Create a list of possible ways to address this issue using words. This may include letters, editorials, social media, videos and protests.</p> <p><b>ACT</b> Choose one of the options and implement it as an individual, small group or class project.</p>

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 section on staging the compelling question, you may decide to support students' work to take informed action as they work their way through the inquiry. This will provide students with the opportunity to learn about how others have described a social problem while they learn about the problem of slavery through Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

While students identify Stowe's motivations for writing her novel, they can examine their own motivation for investigating a current social problem, such as child labor, trafficking or poverty. As the inquiry continues and students learn about the effect of Stowe's book on 19th-century readers in the formative performance tasks, they may consider the impact they hope their investigations will have. The following chart may help guide students through these comparisons:

The Inquiry	Stages of Taking Informed Action	The Staging Tasks
Can words lead to war?	<b>UNDERSTAND</b>	What social problem am I investigating?
How did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe slavery in <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?		What do I know about this topic?
What led Stowe to write <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?		What is my motivation to study this problem?
How did people in the North and the South react to <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?	<b>ASSESS</b>	How are people responding to this problem?
How did <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> affect abolitionism?		What do I anticipate will be the reaction to my ideas?
	<b>ACT</b>	What can I do to effect change?



**TO UNDERSTAND**, students will participate in a brainstorming activity to identify contemporary problems in the world and to answer the question “What social problem am I investigating?” You may consider a think-pair-share activity to brainstorm topics. Options might include child labor, human trafficking, domestic violence, global warming, poverty or education. Working alone or in groups, students should research the topic to determine necessary context, identify the key causes of the problem and find the most commonly proposed solutions. You should focus students on a goal, such as influencing policymakers, raising money to address the problem or raising awareness about the issue.

**TO ASSESS** the problem, students should consider the question “How are people responding to this problem?” and create a list of possible actions that involve using words or persuasion. Options may include writing 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 problem and work cooperatively to address it, collaborating to write a letter to their elected representative, for example, or to create a website to inform the public about an issue. You may also decide to have students work in small groups, with each group responsible for implementing an action. If time allows, each student 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, you 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 have developed for the issue. In the process, you should support students as they think about the question “What can I do to effect change?” If time permits, you may decide to work on a model 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](#).

## Appendix A: Source Analysis Chart

Summary						
What is the plot of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?						
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?						

## Appendix B: Organizing Quotes Chart

	Text from the conclusion of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and/or Harriet Beecher Stowe's letter to Lord Denman	Text in students' words
Quote 1	<i>"... 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 ..."</i>	
Quote 2		
Quote 3		
Quote 4		

Motivation	<b>Prompt:</b> Given the quotes you identified, what was Stowe's motivation for writing <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ?

## Appendix C: T-Chart for Analyzing Reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

	<i>The Morning Post</i>	<i>Southern Press</i>
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?		

## Appendix D: Evidence Chart

Initial Claim	
What is your opening claim? This claim should appear in the first 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 sources.	

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.	



## Appendix E: *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 U.S. history before the Civil War of 1861–1865.
Christian charity	A common theme in <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in which Harriet Beecher Stowe argued that Christianity and its cardinal Golden Rule condemned slavery, rather than supported it (a position held by some Southerners).
Compromise of 1850	One of the most contested political agreements in the antebellum period. To answer the question of whether slavery would be legal in the expanding Western territories, the Compromise of 1850 allowed the whole state of California to be free of slavery. In exchange, it created slave elections in the Utah and Arizona territories, forbid the trade of enslaved people in Washington D.C. and issued a new Fugitive Slave Act (The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850).
enslaver	A person who practices chattel slavery, a system in which enslaved people were seen as property instead of human beings.
fugitive	An enslaved person who attempted to run away to freedom, usually to northern states or Canada. They often ran away at night or on Sunday to escape capture with the help of others, in 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 fugitives to their enslavers and punished those who did not comply. It was also known as the “Bloodhound Law,” after the dogs used in tracking enslaved people who had escaped.
Northern and Southern press	Newspapers and magazines in the United States that reflected unique regional political and cultural interests in their publications.
slaver's auctions	Public events often held in southern port cities, where enslaved people were put on display and sold to the highest bidders.