

Chapter Fourteen
Primary Source Exercise
HIST 2111 FA 19

Reading:

Primary source: *The Fugitive Slave Act* (September 18, 1850):

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1850fugitive.asp>

After you have read the primary source listed above (as well as Chapter Fourteen, and watched the videos for this module), answer the following questions, based on what you know about the Sectional Conflict, arguments over the expansion of slavery, as well as what you know about the mid-19th century in America more generally.

1. What are some examples (explicit or implicit) in this source of the Sectional Crisis regarding slavery and the expansion of slavery?

2. To what degree can we see some of the various attitudes or characteristics of slavery in America (that you learned about in this or previous chapters) reflected in this primary source? That is, do you see any clues about the way(s) pro-slavery Americans thought about the nature of slavery?

3. To what degree (at all) can we see some of the various attitudes or characteristics of abolitionist thought in America (that you learned about in this or previous chapters) reflected in this primary source? That is, do you see any clues about the way(s) anti-slavery Americans thought about the nature of slavery?

4. Southern slave-holding states routinely used arguments privileging individual states' rights to defend slavery. That is, they regularly argued that states, not the federal government, should be able to regulate the practice of slavery. (This was usually couched in the language of property rights, which had to be protected from federal encroachment.) This primary source takes the opposite approach, using federal authority to by expand "property" rights from certain states (i.e. those with slavery) into other states (those without it), and mandating that anti-slavery individuals take actions to preserve slavery. How can you explain this tension between using states' rights arguments on one hand and using the power of federal law on the other?

