

# The struggle to end slavery



Montage of images showing map of the slave coast, advert for a slave auction, a female slave at work and the seal of the Anti-Slavery Society.

By the time Britain abolished it in 1833, slavery, as an institution, had been in existence for over 400 years. With so many people involved and so much money tied up in it, it was never going to end overnight.

In Britain the struggle to bring about the end of slavery started at the end of the eighteenth century. The first group formed to agitate for a ban on the trade in slaves, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, was established in 1787 and it spent the next two decades lobbying Parliament and organising petitioning campaigns. Despite having popular support, however, it was not until 1807 that the slave trade was banned.

Although the trade in slaves had ended the campaigners now faced another challenge: the struggle to end slavery itself. The battle was led by groups such as the Society for the Mitigation and Abolition of Slavery and the Anti-Slavery Society but they faced opposition from interest groups such as the West India Planters and Merchants. It took another quarter of a century before slavery was finally abolished in the British Empire.

You can find out more about the struggle to end slavery by looking at the following case studies: [the pro-slavery argument](#) and [the anti-slavery argument](#).

Go to  
Case Study 1

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Name .....

Class.....

### **The struggle to end slavery**

The fight to bring about the abolition of slavery in the British Empire took place over 50 years and it was bitterly contested. Both sides of the debate believed fervently in their cause and used a number of arguments to support their case. The sources used in this case study (and all the other case studies relating to slavery) give a taste of what some of these arguments were. It is your task to make some sense of what was said.

This worksheet has been designed to be used as a basis for a whole class activity. Once the class has worked through both case studies, it should be divided into three groups. The first group will represent the pro-slavery supporters and the second group will represent the anti-slavery supporters. Both groups will then have to present a case to the third

group, who represent a bunch of undecided MPs about to vote on the Abolition of Slavery Bill. Although the third group do not have to make a presentation they will need to listen carefully to both groups and question them about their arguments. At the end of the activity the third group should decide how they would vote based on who presented the most convincing case.

### **Step 1: Recording the evidence**

Before starting work on the presentations, you need to read the sources and start working out your argument. A table for making notes and observations has been provided for each case study which you might find useful. If you have time you might also want to look at some of the sources in the other investigations into slavery.

***Group 1: the pro-slavery argument***

Source 1 says...	What would the anti-slavery supporters say in response?	What will the general public think about this argument?	How can I use the information in my presentation?
Source 2 says....			

***Group 2: the anti-slavery argument***

Source 1 says...	What would the pro-slavery supporters say in response?	What will the general public think about this argument?	How can I use the information in my presentation?
Source 2 says....			

**Group 3: the undecided MPs**

Arguments used by the pro-slavery supporters	What the anti-slavery supporters will say	What I need to ask
Arguments used by the anti-slavery supporters	What the pro-slavery supporters will say	What I need to ask

**Step 2: Presenting your case**

Once you have made all your notes, you will need to start preparing your case. Focus on the arguments you think are the most important and that most support your case - remember you probably won't have time to mention everything!

For each point you might want to include some or all of the following:

- why the point is important and how it supports your argument in general
- what evidence there is to support your point
- what the opposition will say and what you would say in reply
- what the public think about this point

Keep your presentation short - about 5 minutes - and remember that the group of MPs will probably want to ask you some tricky questions!

Good luck!!!