

Sojourner Truth - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. New York, where Sojourner Truth grew up, abolished slavery very gradually. The Gradual ****Emancipation**** Law of 1799 mandated freedom for all enslaved people born after July 4, 1799—but not until they were at least in their twenties. For enslaved people who, like Truth, were born prior to July 4, 1799, things were even more dire, as there was initially no hope of freedom at all. Finally, in 1817, New York passed another law, stating that this latter group would also be granted freedom—but not until July 4, 1827. Truth’s enslaver, John Dumont, told her that he would give Truth her “free papers” one year before the new law was to go into effect. But when the time arrived for Dumont to fulfill this promise, he rescinded it. A few months later, Truth left on her own, taking her young daughter with her. She found shelter with Maria and Isaac Van Wagenen, ****abolitionists**** who viewed slavery as morally repugnant. Shortly thereafter, Dumont showed up at the Van Wagenen’s home to reclaim what was, in the eyes of the law, his “property.” But the Van Wagenens paid Dumont \$25, and he relinquished his claim.

Based on the text, what inference can you make?

A. The Van Wagenens forced Truth to remain with them.

B. Truth broke the law when she freed herself from slavery.

The text explains that according to New York law, Truth would be “granted freedom—but not until July 4, 1827.” It also states that “Dumont showed up at the Van Wagenen’s home to reclaim what was, in the eyes of the law, his ‘property.’” From these statements, we can infer that Truth broke the law when she left Dumont’s house.

C. John Dumont forced the Van Wagenens to reject Truth.

D. John Dumont broke the law when he rescinded his promise to Truth.

2. When Sojourner Truth learned that her enslaved son, Peter, had been sent to Alabama—a violation of New York law—she engaged in a lengthy legal battle for justice. This required a great deal of bravery and persistence on Truth’s part, but she was ultimately victorious. Peter’s enslaver was forced to deliver him to his mother’s custody in New York. Truth’s court case holds a prominent role in legal history, as she is believed to be the first Black woman to successfully sue a White man for the freedom of an enslaved family member. But for generations, the primary sources for this important case—the court documents—were lost. Then, in 2022, author Jim Folts was examining papers at the New York State Archives. Folts wasn’t researching Sojourner Truth, but documents bearing her former name, Isabella Van Wagenen, caught his attention. The papers turned out to be the missing court records. It was an incredible discovery that has enriched both the field of American history and the preservation of Truth’s legacy.

With which statement would the author of this passage most likely agree?

- A.** Primary sources are crucial to historical scholarship.
The text states that the discovery of the court documents, which are “the primary sources for this important case,” has “enriched... the field of American history.” From this, we can infer that the author would most likely agree that primary sources are crucial to historical scholarship.
- B.** Sojourner Truth’s court records do not qualify as a primary source.
- C.** The study of history can become fragmented by excessive use of primary sources.
- D.** The primary sources for Sojourner Truth’s court case were created after her death.

3. ****Excerpt of *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave* by Sojourner Truth**** *In 1850, Truth published a memoir. Because she could not write, she told her story orally to Olive Gilbert. Gilbert presented Truth’s account from the third person perspective and also included some of her own views. The following excerpt discusses Truth’s experience with the Northampton Association, a Massachusetts utopian community that promoted social reform.*

Based on the text, what was Olive Gilbert’s attitude toward the Northampton Association?

*She did not fall in love at first sight with the Northampton Association, for she arrived there at a time when appearances did not correspond with the ideas of associationists, as they had been spread out in their writings; for their phalanx was a factory, and they were wanting in means to carry out their ideas of beauty and elegance, as they would have done in different circumstances. But she thought she would make an effort to tarry with them one night, though that seemed to her no desirable affair. But as soon as she saw that accomplished, literary, and refined persons were living in that plain and simple manner, and submitting to the labors and privations incident to such an infant institution, she said, “Well, if these can live here, *I* can.” Afterwards, she gradually became pleased with, and attached to, the place and the people, as well she might; for it must have been no small thing to have found a home in a “community composed of some of the choicest spirits of the age,” where all was characterized by an equality of feeling, a liberty of thought and speech, and a largeness of soul, she could not have before met with, to the same extent, in any of her wanderings.*

- A. Mocking
- C. Envious

B. Condescending



D.

Proud

Statements like “She gradually became pleased with, and attached to, the place and the people, as well she might” and “All was characterized by an equality of feeling, a liberty of thought and speech, and a largeness of soul” indicate that Gilbert was proud of the Northampton Association.

4. *In 1851, a group of **advocates** came together at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention to discuss **suffrage** and other women’s rights issues. Truth, a skilled **orator**, attended and delivered a spontaneous address. Two versions of this speech were published—one which portrayed Truth as speaking in a **stereotypical dialect**, and the other which did not. The account without the stereotyping is considered by historians to be more accurate in both speech and content. Read an excerpt from that version below.*

This excerpt demonstrates Truth’s {}.

A. anger



B.

wit

Truth’s wit is demonstrated through inventive and humorous statements, such as “You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we can’t take more than our pint’ll hold” and “Why children, if you have woman’s rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won’t be so much trouble.”

C. solemnity

D. moodiness