

Dred Scott-His Life and Impact

Life

Dred Scott was born as an enslaved person in Virginia between 1795 and 1800. His master was Peter Blow. In 1830, Peter Blow moved to St. Louis, Missouri, taking Dredd Scott with him. Missouri was a slave state at this time as a result of the Missouri Compromise. Peter Blow died in 1832, and in 1833, Dred Scott was sold to Dr. John Emerson. Dr. Emerson was a U.S. Army surgeon who was stationed at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. In the following year, 1834, Dr. Emerson was transferred to Fort Armstrong in Illinois. Illinois was a state that had outlawed slavery in its state constitution, but Army officers did not feel they were bound by the laws of a state or territory in which they were stationed in since they were not citizens of that state or territory. Then Dr. Emerson was transferred again in 1836 to Fort Snelling in Wisconsin Territory. Slavery was illegal here as well, but again the laws were ignored. While here, Emerson purchased an enslaved woman named Harriett Robinson from another officer. Dred Scott and Harriett Robinson were married and had two daughters. Over the next four years, Emerson was transferred to Louisiana (a slave state), back to Fort Snelling, and eventually to Jefferson Barracks. Each time, Scott and his family accompanied him. In 1843, Dr. Emerson died and the Scotts became the property of his widow. She hired them out to earn income. In 1846, the Scotts began a series of court cases to win their freedom that stretched over the next ten years. While they eventually lost, they received financial support from the son of his first master, Peter Blow. In fact, this same son purchased the Scotts' freedom in 1857. Dred Scott died in 1858 in St. Louis. Harriet Scott died in 1876.

Court Cases

In 1846, Dred Scott and his wife petitioned a Missouri court for their freedom, but their case was rejected. A judge granted them a new trial in 1847. Scott lost this trial on a technicality—he couldn't prove that he and Harriet were owned by Mrs. Emerson. In 1850, the Circuit Court of St. Louis County, meeting in the Old Courthouse in St. Louis, heard the Scotts' case and granted them their freedom. Emerson again appealed to the Missouri Supreme Court. The Missouri Supreme Court, also meeting in the Old Courthouse in St. Louis, reversed the decision of the Circuit Court in 1852. The Scotts then decided to take their case to a federal court. In 1854, a federal court ruled against the Scotts and in favor of Emerson by

saying the Scotts were enslaved persons according to the laws of the state of Missouri. Because this was a federal court, the decision was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. The case was heard in 1856, and a decision given in 1857. Hoping to end the question of slavery and its expansion into the territories, the Supreme Court ruled against Dred Scott. In his official written opinion for the Court's decision, Chief Justice Roger Taney gave three reasons for their ruling. The first was that the United States Constitution did not recognize African Americans as citizens so Dred Scott had no right to sue in court. Second, the Court declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional so that living in a free state or territory covered by that law did not mean an enslaved person should be granted his freedom. And lastly, it was stated that the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution forbade any law that would deprive a slaveholder of his property.

Impact

Instead of solving the issue of slavery and its expansion, the Dred Scott Case only added to the problem. Northerners and Abolitionists were furious. They accused the Court of trying to undo the principles of liberty set forth by the Constitution. It was even called a conspiracy designed to promote slavery. Southerners and those sympathetic to slavery declared it a victory for the right of states and territories to determine where slavery could exist without federal interference. The Republican Party used the case to promote their views on restricting the expansion of slavery during the 1860 presidential election. It also split the Democratic Party along sectional lines with Northern Democrats opposing it and Southern Democrats favoring. It is also seen as one of the issues that would trigger the Civil War because it further deepened the divide between North and South. Lastly, the Dred Scott Case motivated Congress to pass the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution following the Civil War. These amendments abolished slavery, guaranteed due process of the law, equal protection of the law, and defined U.S. citizenship. In effect, they overturned the ruling of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case.

Name _____

Chart of Dred Scott's Life

Directions: As you read Dred Scott-His Life and Impact, fill in the missing information on the chart below.

1795-1800	
	Moves to St. Louis with his master
	Sold to Dr. Emerson
1834	
1836	
	Missouri court rejects case
	Circuit Court of St. Louis County grants freedom
1852	
1854	
	Supreme Court of the United States gives its ruling that he is not a citizen of the United States
	Son of his first master buys his freedom
1858	

Map Work

Directions: Color the states that allowed slavery in which Dred Scott lived **gray**. Color the states where slavery was outlawed in which Dred Scott lived as **blue**.

Answer Key for Chart of Dred Scott's Life (5 pts each = 60 Points)

1795-1800	Born a slave in Virginia
1830	Moves to St. Louis, Missouri, with his master
1833	Sold to Dr. Emerson
1834	Moves to Ft. Armstrong, Illinois, with Dr. Emerson
1836	Moves to Ft. Snelling, Wisconsin Territory, with Dr. Emerson
1846	Missouri court rejects case
1850	Circuit Court of St. Louis County grants freedom
1852	Missouri Supreme Court reserves Circuit Court decision
1854	Federal Court declares him a slave
1857	Supreme Court of the United States gives its ruling that he is not a citizen of the United States
1857	Son of first master buys his freedom
1858	Dies in St. Louis, Missouri

Answer Key for Map Work (5 pts each = 25 pts)

Illinois and Wisconsin Territory should be colored green.

Virginia, Missouri, and Louisiana should be colored red.

Scoring Guide For Dred Scott Power Point

Directions: You are going to create a power point presentation about Dred Scott. The following requirements will be used to evaluate your power point. Your final product must be submitted in the manner directed by your teacher.

_____ My first slide has a title and my name. (5 pts)

_____ My second slide introduces the topic of Dred Scott. It explains why we should know about this Supreme Court case and this person. (10 pts)

_____ I have three slides that tell about major events in his life. (30 pts)

_____ I have a slide that tells about the U.S. Supreme Court ruling. (10 pts)

_____ I have two slides that tell about the impact the Supreme Court ruling had. (20 pts)

_____ I have at least two images that accompany and help explain two of the slides. (10 pts)

_____ My power point includes headings so each slide is identified. (10 pts)

_____ My power point is neatly done and submitted on time. (5 pts)

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