

Elizabeth Freeman wins freedom

1781 | Grade 2 · Read & notice

Words to know

freedom — the ability to live and act without unjust control

court — a place or group that decides legal cases

rights — freedoms and protections people are entitled to

Look closely



Portrait of Elizabeth Freeman in a blue dress and white cap, with a gold necklace.

Read the story

An enslaved woman known as Bett went to court with a man named Brom. They challenged their enslavement and won. Bett later used the name Elizabeth Freeman. Her action helped challenge slavery in Massachusetts.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. What happened in this reading? Tell one fact.
2. Who or what is this reading mostly about?
3. Choose a word from the word bank. Explain it in your own words.
4. Look at the picture and its caption. What does it help you notice? Is it from the time of the event?

Follow-up reading: Quock Walker and the constitution

1783

Quock Walker sought freedom through the courts. His cases helped challenge slavery. In 1783, Chief Justice William Cushing explained that slavery conflicted with the state constitution. People used the language of rights to demand change.

How are the two readings alike or different? Tell a partner one connection. Which event came first?

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.2.1: ask and answer questions; RI.2.2: identify a main topic; RI.2.7: use images and words; W.2.2 and SL.2.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: An enslaved woman known as Bett went to court with a man named Brom. They challenged their enslavement and won. Bett later used the name Elizabeth Freeman. Her action helped challenge slavery in Massachusetts. Brom and Bett v. Ashley used legal arguments connected to the new constitution's equality principles. Freeman's victory was a specific case, not a single law instantly ending every form of slavery.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Susan Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick / Massachusetts Historical Society, public domain.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.