

Anthony Burns is returned to slavery

1854 | Grade 2 · Read & notice

Words to know

law — a rule made through government

resist — act against a force, rule, or demand

freedom — the ability to live and act without unjust control

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

Anthony Burns had escaped slavery and reached Boston. He was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act. People protested, but officials sent him back to slavery. Supporters later helped purchase his freedom.

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: The Sixth Massachusetts answers the call

1861

The Sixth Massachusetts militia responded quickly when the Civil War began. Its soldiers traveled toward Washington. In Baltimore, conflict with a crowd led to deaths. Massachusetts became deeply involved in the war.

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: Anthony Burns had escaped slavery and reached Boston. He was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act. People protested, but officials sent him back to slavery. Supporters later helped purchase his freedom. The case exposed conflict between federal enforcement and antislavery resistance. Protests did not overturn the federal law. Burns's own life and agency matter beyond the political symbol made of his case.

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: Original site illustration.

[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.