

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Voices on the Dred Scott Case

### Chief Justice Taney's Opinion

“We think they [people of African ancestry] are not [citizens], and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States.

. . . [T]he legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument.

Upon the whole, therefore, it is the judgment of this court, that it appears by the record before us that the plaintiff in error is not a citizen of Missouri, in the sense in which that word is used in the Constitution; and that the Circuit Court of the United States, for that reason, had no jurisdiction in the case, and could give no judgment in it.”

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- What argument does Chief Justice Taney use to determine that Dred Scott is not free?

### Charles Sumner, a Senator from Massachusetts was outraged with Chief Justice Taney's opinion.

“I speak what cannot be denied when I declare that the opinion of the Chief Justice in the case of Dred Scott was more thoroughly abominable than anything of the kind in the history of courts. Judicial baseness reached its lowest point on that occasion.”  
- quoted in *The Dred Scott Decision: Law or Politics?*

- Why do you think Charles Sumner called the ruling “abominable?”

Grade 7 History of the United States and New York  
Unit 5: A Nation Divided and Reunited  
Lesson 2: Government Attempts to Settle the Issue of Slavery

**Chief Justice Taney declares** that blacks, whether free or enslaved, are not citizens of the U.S. How do you think slave-holding Southerners responded to the ruling? How do you think abolitionists responded to this ruling?

<b>Slave -holding Southerner</b>	<b>Abolitionist</b>

4. How did the Dred Scott decision divide the nation?

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