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Source Based Essay

Arguments put forward in the defense of slavery prior to the Civil War were very controversial. In order of importance, sources E, B and A support the statement, 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' heavily due to morality. However, sources D and C, in order of importance, refute this claim in disagreement with the statement 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' due to the South's economic dependence and the southern perception of African Americans as an inferior race.

Source E, the most important source, supports the statement that 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' Source E, contrary to all other sources, gives an opinion without a strong southern or northern predisposition, making it the best source. Dissimilar to other sources, source E doesn't present the information in a harsh or opinionated manner due to the passing of time creating a better understanding and analysis of slavery and the arguments put forward in defense of it. Also unlike any other source, source E sees both sides of the argument, but outweighs the southern economic need by the morality issue of slaves as property. The information is presented with a neutral tone, without a harsh treatment of the issue, and implements statistics to build background and give perspective increasing the credibility of the content. This source supports claims made by source D, as slavery was immensely aiding the south economically, however refutes this as a valid argument due to this source's agreement with the issues of morality and freedom, as stated in sources A and B.

Source B agrees with source E in support of the statement, 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' due to its destruction of morality. Source B has an immediately eminent predisposition of hatred toward slavery, coming from a former slave. Frederick Douglas however is a very well educated man and a leading abolitionist who has first-hand knowledge of the horrors of slavery. This source also comes just as Uncle Tom's Cabin was gaining international recognition, meaning the American people and people around the world may actually register what Douglas says and feel stronger towards the issue of slavery than before. The content of this source has a lot of emotion set forth by Douglas' experiences as a slave, which reduces its reliability. Like sources A, C and D, this is a speech; however in this Douglas was requested to speak, exemplifying his prominence as an abolitionist. Douglas however gives the general sentiment of many slaves in his speech, increasing credibility, which is a strong agreement with the claim 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.'

Source A also agrees with sources B and E in agreement with the statement 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' This source has a strong predisposition due to William Seward being a major opponent of slavery, as a Northern Republican abolitionist. This source comes just a few months before the passing of the Compromise of 1850, which was in September of this year, which would increase Seward's hostility towards the anti-slavery opposition. Seward's credibility is increased, however, due to his extensive knowledge and role in the slavery movement. The information of this document disagrees with the defense of slavery due to freedom being a major part of the US Constitution. The content of this document is presented with a harsh tone set forth by Seward's strong opinions of slavery, which decreases the reliability. Seward's narrow scope on this topic also decreases his reliability of information. Source A contradicts source C in its statement that the Constitution recognizes the Negro as not equal to the white. Seward states that the Constitution is based on freedom, which includes the Negro, which is why he agrees with the statement 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.'

Source D, contrarily, refutes the statement 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' due to the southern economic dependence on slavery. Source D comes after the attack on Fort Sumter, implying a harsh treatment of the slavery issue by Jefferson Davis. Coming from Jefferson Davis, the source has a narrow scope decreasing credibility. However because Davis is the President of the Confederacy, he represents the majority of opinion amongst southerners. Unlike sources A and B, source D uses statistics to back up its claims to slavery as necessary to the southern economy increasing the credibility of the content. However, the content is presented with a very eminent predisposition, referring to white Americans as the 'superior race' and African Americans as 'savages.' This 'Aryan' belief is equal to the opinions stated in source C, which also refutes the claim in disagreement with the defense of slavery.

Source C also refutes the claim 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' due to African Americans being inferior. Source C comes just a few weeks before the attack on Fort Sumter, which was on April 12th. This correlates to immense tension between the Union and Confederacy, leading towards Alexander Stephens being very hostile toward the issue of slavery. Due to the source coming from the Vice-President of the Confederacy there is a very narrow scope and strong predisposition, decreasing the credibility. However, just as in source D, the source most likely represents the majority of opinion in the south due to Stephens being a representative of the Belligerent Nation. The information is presented in a very opinionated manner, because of Stephen's reference to African Americans as the inferior race to white Americans. The content of this source may be opinionated but it represents the vast majority of the opinions of southerners who defend slavery as their main source of profit and income.

Due to the issue of morality sources E, B and A, in order of importance, support the claim that 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.' However, due to the southern economic dependence on slavery, sources D and C, in order of importance, refute the claim 'The arguments put forward in defense of slavery were unreasonable, even by the standards of the time.'

D ✓
C ✓
P ✓