



**Directions:** Use the document and the facts below to answer the question that follows.

**Source:** The following is an excerpt from an 1850 speech by United States Senator Solomon Weathersbee Downs. The speech was delivered on the floor of the Senate in response to a proposal by Senator Henry Clay, a proposal that ultimately contributed to the Compromise of 1850.

“Sir, I call upon the opponents of this system . . . to prove that even the white laboring classes in the North – I say nothing of the blacks there – are as happy, or as contented, or as comfortably situated, as the blacks in the South. Sir, the Slaves in the South do not suffer one-tenth part of the evils that the white laborers do in the North. Poverty is unknown to the southern slave; for as soon as the master of slaves becomes too poor to provide for them, he sells them to others who can take care of them. This, sir, is one of the excellencies of the system of slavery, that the slave never experiences the pinching wants of poverty.”

**Additional facts related to Downs’s speech:**

1. The Constitution banned the U.S. slave trade after 1808.
2. Downs was a slaveholder.
3. South Carolina Senator John Calhoun also defended slavery in this way in a speech in February of 1837.
4. Downs represented Louisiana, where most voters were pro-slavery.

**Question:** Which 2 of the 4 facts above might cause you to question the reliability of Downs’s argument about the conditions facing slaves in the South?

Explain your reasoning on the following page.

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Fact # \_\_\_\_\_ might help determine whether Downs's argument is reliable because \_\_\_\_\_

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Fact # \_\_\_\_\_ might help determine whether Downs's argument is reliable because \_\_\_\_\_

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