
Abolitionist Arguments in America and Europe

Benjamin Banneker and Germaine de Staël

Project Vox

Bell-Ringer

- Do you know people who tell others they **should perform** certain actions, like recycling, but who **do not perform** those actions themselves?
- Do you know people who tell others they **should not perform** certain actions, like cheating while in a relationship, but who **do perform** those actions themselves?

List as many examples as you can.

A **hypocrite** is someone who:

- 1 claims to have moral standards or beliefs
- 2 to which their own behavior does not conform.

Because hypocrites' actions are inconsistent with their words,
we infer that they do not actually believe what they say they believe.

Two Abolitionist Arguments

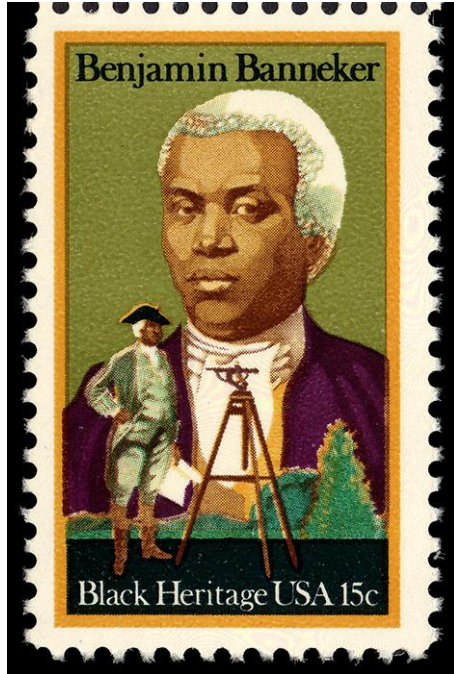
In the U.S.

Benjamin Banneker wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1791 urging him to abolish slavery.

In Europe

Germaine de Staël wrote to European leaders in 1814 urging them to abolish the slave trade.

Argument 1: Benjamin Banneker (1791)



Postage stamp honoring Benjamin Banneker, issued in 1980

Source: [National Postage Museum](#)

The Context: Slavery was practiced in 12 of the 14 states and had received protections in the Constitution, which was adopted in 1788.

The Author: Banneker, who was a free Black man and an accomplished astronomer who helped survey Washington, DC

The Recipient: Thomas Jefferson, who was a slave owner, author of the Declaration of Independence and then served as Secretary of State

The Ask: Abolish slavery in the newly-formed U.S.

Argument 2: Germaine de Staël (1814)



Portrait of Mme de Staël, circa 1810, by Marie Éléonore Godefroid (1778–1849) after Baron Gérard (1770–1837).

The Context: England had already abolished the slave trade, but many other European countries — including France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, and Prussia — still participated.

The Author: Staël was a philosopher, novelist, writer, intellectual, and major political actor in Europe. She helped shape the French Republic, and she strongly resisted Napoleon's growing power.

The Recipient: European leaders were gathered in Paris to negotiate a peace treaty after the fall of Napoleon

The Ask: Abolish the slave trade

Guiding Questions

As you read Banneker and Staël's arguments, consider:

- **Why do the authors think their recipients are hypocrites?**
- **Do you agree that the recipients are hypocrites? Why or why not?**
- **Does the charge of hypocrisy strengthen the authors' arguments? Why or why not?**

Exit Ticket

Is it important for you to avoid hypocrisy? Why or why not?