

Life as a Slave

Big Ideas of the Lesson:

- Students will use slave narratives to delve into slave life
- Students will compare and contrast their life in the 21st century with that of a slave in the 19th century
- Students will utilize the 'Asking Questions,' 'Visualizing,' 'Inferring' and 'Making Connections' skill components

Lesson Abstract:

Students will use recollections of slave life as narrated by elderly ex-slaves recorded in the 1930's by the WPA and stored in the Library of Congress archives; these narratives are accompanied by photographs of the ex-slave, giving actual faces to the stories. Divided into smaller groups, students will focus on one slave and make comparisons between their lives now and that of a slave two hundred years ago. Each group will make a presentation on the life of their assigned slave. Worksheets, vocabulary sheets and extension activity suggestions are included. A brief explanation of "primary sources" would be a good introductory tool for this lesson.

Objective:

Students will use a variety of primary sources to clarify, elaborate, understand and relate life as a slave in the United States before Emancipation.

Standards and Content Expectations:

H1.1.- Temporal Thinking: Use historical conceptual devices to organize and study the past.

H1.2.- Historical Inquiry and Analysis: Use historical inquiry and analysis to study the past.

H1.4.- Historical Understanding: Use historical concepts, patterns and themes to study the past.

MI.U4. - Era 4 - Expansion and Reform (1792-1861)

MI.U4.2.2 - The Institution of Slavery - Explain the ideology of the institution of slavery, its policies and consequences

Comprehension

Students will...

R.CM.08.01 connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

R.CM.08.02 retell through concise summarization grade-level narrative and informational text.

R.CM.08.03 analyze global themes, universal truths, and principles within and across texts to create a deeper understanding by drawing conclusions, making inferences, and synthesizing.

R.CM.08.04 apply significant knowledge from grade-level science, social studies, and mathematics texts.

Writing Process

Students will...

W.PR.08.01 set a purpose, consider audience, and replicate authors' styles and patterns when writing a narrative or informational piece.

W.PR.08.02 apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for both narrative (e.g., graphic organizers designed to depict rising and falling actions, roles of minor characters, credibility of narrator) and informational writing (e.g., compare/contrast, cause/effect, or sequential text patterns).

W.PR.08.03 draft focused ideas experimenting with various ways of sequencing information including ordering arguments, or sequencing ideas chronologically by importance when writing compositions.

W.PR.08.04 revise drafts for coherence and consistency in word choice, structure, and style; and read their own work from another reader's perspective.

W.PR.08.05 proofread and edit writing using grade-level checklists and other appropriate resources both individually and in groups.

Key Concepts/Essential Learning:

- A teenager's life as a slave in the 19th Century United States was almost incomprehensively different than the life of a teenager in the 21st Century.
- A slave not only was considered the property of another human being, but he or she was given absolutely no choices in what they ate, what they wore, where they went or what they did with their time.

Curriculum Fit:

American History (Era 4) – Institution of Slavery

Time Required:

This can be modified to individual needs depending on use of extension activities; but a minimum of three (3) to four (4) class periods.

Instructional Resources:

- Slavery in the United States: Primary Sources and the Historical Record, a lesson plan in the Library of Congress collection. (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/slavery/>)
- Copies of the narratives and photographs of ex-slaves:
 - John W. Fields
 - Tempie Cummins
 - Sarah Graves
 - Sarah Gudger
 - William Moore
 - Charlie WilliamsFrom the Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938 collection in the Library of Congress.
(<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/narratives-slavery/>)
- Excerpt from Fifty Years in Chains by Charles Ball; pages 9-12 and 16-17.
(<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/ball/ball.html>)

- Questionnaires for each of the above named ex-slaves - to be used both in groups and as a listening device when other groups make their presentations
- Opening questionnaire for each student to answer about himself
- Vocabulary sheets for each of the above named ex-slaves
- Overall Universal Vocabulary sheet for the entire group
- List of suggested extension activities
- Google.com, dictionary.com and thefreedictionary.com can be used to assist in vocabulary work

Lesson Sequence:

(1) Hand out the opening questionnaire to each student to answer the questions in a short essay. Collect to hand back as an assessment tool.

(2) It would be profitable if the vocabulary is pre-taught as many of the words in the narratives have not been in common use for a couple hundred years. The universal vocabulary sheet contains words found in all the narratives; there is a supplemental sheet for group use with each individual ex-slave. These can be collected and graded.

(3) The class can be divided into four or six groups depending on total numbers. There are six ex-slaves in this lesson, three males and three females. Students might have better insight and cognizance if the male students studied the male ex-slaves and the female students studied the female ex-slaves as certain areas of their lives depended on the gender of the slave.

(4) Each group will read the narrative of their assigned ex-slave and fill out the questionnaire for that slave. Each group will make a presentation about that slave's life under slavery. The group will divide roles in this presentation among themselves and the group will receive be graded as a unit. Teachers will need to **use the rubric of their choice** to grade the group presentations. While each group makes that presentation, the other students will use the blank questionnaire to fill in the answers. These can be collected and use to grade the other students' listening and attention skills.

(5) Students will need to write individual essays comparing and contrasting their life today with the ex-slave they were assigned. Teachers will **use the rubric of their choice** to grade these essays.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed a minimum of three or four times:

- Completion of vocabulary sheets
- Group presentation
- Attention to other group presentations
- Final compare/contrast essay

Additional assessment could include performance of extension activities.

Extension Activities

- Use the Internet to locate a simple (i.e. primitive) recipe for cornbread. Make the recipe and serve it with molasses for the students' lunch - approximating a slave's typical dinner.
- Locate pictures of slaves' quarters on a plantation.
- Make a sample 'slave house' out of a shoebox.
- Do a geography report on the area where their assigned ex-slave lived and worked: what were the crops, what was the climate?
- Examine the use of the word "nigger" in the ex-slaves' narratives. What is the etymology of the word "nigger." Why is it still so explosive today?
- Use the Library of Congress web site and write a brief history of the undertaking of the slave narratives.
- Compare/contrast the life of a field slave versus that of a house slave.
- Study the various occupations of the six ex-slaves: how was cloth made? How was cloth dyed? What was involved in tanning leather? Etc.
- Use the excerpt from Fifty Years in Chains by Charles Ball; pages 9-12 and 16-17 (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/ball/ball.html>) to compare and contrast with the ex-slaves' narratives.
- Research ways the slaves would heal themselves with herbs and tree bark if they became sick.
- Research the use of corporal punishment as a way to control slaves' behavior. Were there any laws anywhere that supervised the use of corporal punishment with the slaves?
- One of the slaves mentioned that he didn't know people could actually buy anything besides tobacco, gunpowder and slaves. Study the self-sufficiency of the southern farm/plantation system and analyze why owning slaves was so crucial to this system.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Opening Questionnaire for Students

Write a short essay about your life as it is right now. In your essay, answer the following questions:

Who do you live with?

What do you eat? How do you get your food?

What kind of clothes do you wear? How do you get your clothes?

What do you do during the day?

What do you do after school and in the evening?

How do you sleep?

Where do you live? How do you keep warm in the winter or cool in the summer?

Do you have any free time? What do you do with your free time? Do you have to ask permission from someone to do certain things with your free time?

Unit Vocabulary

overseer:

plantation:

quarters:

plow (noun and verb):

hoe:

master:

ox/oxen:

cuss:

acre:

split-rail (fence):

card and spin:

Emancipation:

Questionnaire about the ex-slave _____

How old was he/she when he/she was taken from his/her mother? _____

What did he/she usually eat? _____

How did s/he sleep? _____

What were his/her clothes like? _____

How were the slaves at his/her plantation punished if they did something wrong? _____

What time did he/she have to start working in the morning? _____

What did he/she do during the day? _____

What did he/she do during the night? _____

Did he/she learn to read and write? _____

What happened if a slave at his/her plantation became sick? _____

Where did he/she live as a slave? _____

When was he/she born? _____

How old was he/she when Emancipation came on January 1st, 1863? _____

What did he/she do when he/she became free? _____

Specific Vocabulary and Questions for each Narrative:

(words marked with a (P) signifies a picture should be sought to add to the definition)

John Fields: domestic, disinterested, heir, heartache, despair, meager, harsh, liable, prosecution, offender, estate, bunked, gradually, acquire, overbearing, incident, innerds, tended, seceded

- How many brothers and sisters did John have?
- How were they divided up?
- What happens when you pour salt water on a bleeding wound?

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Tempie Cummins: pallet, homespun, "slip on," cast-off, horse-thorns, "run along," beech switch, "wait upon," bale, declare, ravine, dipping vat (P) patrols, fodder

- Why did Tempie only wear her dress when company came? What do you think she wore the rest of the time?
- What does it mean that she had to wear her dresses until they were strings?"
- What does it mean "going barefoot in winter until her feet cracked open?"
- What does "...against Master's will" mean?
- What does it mean that she "gathered up scraps the white [children] left?"
- Why did she have to work after dark?

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Sarah Graves: owned, surname, allot, allotment, mortgage, chattel, grief, mate (spouse), anguish, idle, log house (P), pallet, tend, grain, grate corn, grist mill, piece of tin, meal (as in cornmeal), wool, shear, weave, bark (noun), harvesting, hickory stick, cat-of-nine-tails (P), brood (verb), "currying down"

- What did it mean when Sarah had to leave her father in Kentucky because he was allotted to another man?
- Why didn't Sarah's master want her mother to marry again?
- What does it mean - "Master never allowed anyone to be idle?"
- What does it mean - ...my husband was owned?"
- What does it mean - "we would color one by using herbs and barks..." ?

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Sarah Gudger: (the) lash, darkies, molasses, corn pone, bedstead, rags, generation, speculator, thrash, "cotton country," hoar-hound, slippery elm, poultice, mammy, crick/creek, drover, critter, "foot company," furlough

- Did Sarah get to rest very often?
- Did she get to rest when it rained?

- Why did she walk barefoot in the snow?
- What did Mammy think happened when somebody disappeared and she never saw them again?
- Why did Mammy think "every time a star falls, somebody's going to die?"

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William Moore: mammy, "called on," hands, craving, victuals, puncheon (P), pallet, yoke, indifferent, sorrowing, bullwhip (P), stake, sprinkle, quiver, slobber, handsaw (P), dam, hauling, agony, cookhouse, "poled ox," declare, gallop, rave, persimmon, piling, smokehouse, "bed you down," sharance, "fetching," Ku Klux Klan (P), praiseful, pension

- Who was Miss Mary?
- Why did Master Tom move everything and everyone to Texas?
- What does it mean "[Master] Tom didn't feel called on to feed his hands any too much?" What were his "hands?"
- Why couldn't the children let [Master] Tom or his wife know they were looking at papers or books?
- Why did Master Tom sprinkle salt in a cut after he whipped a slave?

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Charley Williams: feebleness, trickling, plank, gallery (porch), trembly, patching, grumble, rotting, hulking (adj.), "young Missy/ young Master," passel, sorghum, cane (plant), hide house, shed, cypress, clapboard, strap iron, blacksmith, quinine, "the chills," "square-hewed logs" (P) (log house), chink (verb), daub, bore (verb), carded wool, moss (hanging (P), cheroot, guinea fowl, sow-belly, hoecake, ram-horn, goose quill (P), anvil, loom, horse collar (P), corn-shucks, weave, butternut, indigo, tanning leather, "secesh"

- What does it mean that Charley was a "great big hulking buck of a boy?"
- Why could you smell the hide house so far away?
- Why do you think Charley didn't see any quinine (medicine) until after he was free?
- How was the 'big house' made?
- Where did they get the furniture for their houses?
- How was 'old Master's' hat made?
- What were all the bells and horns for?

