

Studying the Life of Henry Bibb

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Big Ideas / Essential Questions:

- How do both a primary source and a secondary source give us insight into Henry Bibb's life?
- How did Henry Bibb participate in the Underground Railroad?
- What Core Democratic Values did Henry Bibb demonstrate through his words and actions?

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students are introduced to the Underground Railroad and then focus specifically on one individual, Henry Bibb, who was involved with the Underground Railroad. Students learn the differences between primary and secondary sources. They read an article about Henry Bibb's life (a secondary source) and then read excerpts from Henry Bibb's personal narrative (a primary source.) Students identify events from Bibb's life when he benefited from and contributed to the Underground Railroad. Then students discuss the similarities and differences between the two sources. Finally, students write an opinion paragraph in which they identify a Core Democratic Value which they believe Henry Bibb demonstrated, and give evidence from both the primary and secondary sources to support their opinion.

Objectives:

- Students will understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- Students will compare and contrast primary source and secondary source accounts of Henry Bibb's life.
- Students will give examples of how Henry Bibb participated in the Underground Railroad.
- Students will identify a Core Democratic Value which Henry Bibb demonstrated and give evidence to support their opinion.

Recommended Time Frame	Three days if all activities are completed. Teachers may choose to only use select portions of the lesson, which would result in less time required.
Grade Level	Fourth Grade
Curriculum Fit	Social Studies, with integrated English Language Arts objectives

Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations:

Social Studies (4 – H3.0.7) Use case studies or stories to describe the ideas and actions of individuals involved in the Underground Railroad in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region.

Common Core State Standards:

RI.4.6: Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

RI.4.9: Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

RI.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

W.4.1b: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

Materials:

- *Narrative of the life and adventures of Henry Bibb : an American slave / written by himself.* Full text available at loc.gov; excerpts provided in lesson plan.
- Articles on Underground Railroad and Henry Bibb (provide links to article by James and to Musekgon County Museum article)
- Map of free states and slave states in 1820:
<http://faculty.umf.maine.edu/walter.sargent/public.www/web%20103/Missouri%20Compromise%20map.jpg>
- List of Core Democratic Values (provide link to PDF file)
- Writing Rubric (provide link to PDF file)

Procedures:

1. Provide background information on the Underground Railroad. (Provide link to article written by James)

2. Explain the concept of primary sources and secondary sources. Teachers may wish to refer to information from the Library of Congress:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>

3. Show a photograph of Henry Bibb from the following website:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/frontis.html>

Tell students that the man in the photograph is Henry Bibb, who lived from 1815 to 1854 and escaped from slavery. Ask students questions from the Analysis Worksheet to promote their thinking. (The Analysis worksheet is at the end of this lesson plan.)

4. Show the map of free states and slave states in 1820. Point out how Kentucky, where Henry Bibb lived, was a slave state. Just to the north, across the Ohio River, was the free state of Ohio. Trace a path through Ohio and Michigan to Canada—a route Henry followed to escape.

<http://faculty.umf.maine.edu/walter.sargent/public.www/web%20103/Missouri%20Compromise%20map.jpg>

5. Have students read the secondary source article about Henry Bibb from the Muskegon County Museum of African American History. (Provide link) Ask questions from the Analysis Worksheet.

6. Show the book *Narrative of the life and adventures of Henry Bibb: an American slave* at the Library of Congress website. Explain how this is a primary source.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaodyssey:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbcmisc+ody0213\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaodyssey:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbcmisc+ody0213)))

Read aloud the excerpts provided for students. Use the questions on the Analysis Worksheet to guide discussion.

7. Use a Venn diagram to note similarities and differences between the primary and secondary sources on Henry Bibb. Make sure to explain to students that only six excerpts were provided from the primary source; the entire narrative is actually 207 pages long.
8. Provide students with a list of Core Democratic Values (see Materials section); discuss these values with students if they are unfamiliar with them. Ask students to choose one or more Core Democratic Values exemplified by Henry Bibb. Have students write an opinion paragraph in which they state the values they believe Bibb demonstrated, and give evidence to support their opinion.

Evaluation:

Use an informational writing rubric to evaluate the paragraph (see Materials section.)

Excerpts from *Narrative of the life and adventures of Henry Bibb : an American slave / written by himself.*

Excerpt 1: *Pages 29-30. Henry thinks about escaping from Kentucky, a slave state, to free states (and Canada) by crossing the Ohio River.*

Sometimes standing on the Ohio River bluff, looking over on a free State, and as far north as my eyes could see, I have eagerly gazed upon the blue sky of the free North, which at times constrained me to cry out from the depths of my soul, Oh! Canada, sweet land of rest--Oh! when shall I get there? Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might soar away to where there is no slavery; no clanking of chains, no captives, no lacerating of backs, no parting of husbands and wives; and where man ceases to be the property of his fellow man. These thoughts have revolved in my mind a thousand times. I have stood upon the lofty banks of the river Ohio, gazing upon the splendid steamboats, wafted with all their magnificence up and down the river, and I thought of the fishes of the water, the fowls of the air, the wild beasts of the forest, all appeared to be free, to go just where they pleased, and I was an unhappy slave!

Excerpt 2: *Pages 50-52. Henry escapes to Cincinnati, and with help from some young boys, finds the home of Mr. D, an African-American man.*

Mr. D. invited me in, and I found him to be a true friend. He asked me if I was a slave from Kentucky, and if I ever intended to go back into slavery? Not knowing yet whether he was truly in favor of slaves running away, I told him that I had just come over to spend my christmas holydays, and that I was going back. His reply was, "my son, I would never go back if I was in your place; you have a right to your liberty.' I then asked him how I should get my freedom? He referred me to Canada, over which waved freedom's flag, defended by the British Government, upon whose soil there cannot be the foot print of a slave.

He then commenced telling me of the facilities for my escape to Canada; of the Abolitionists; of the Abolition Societies, and of their fidelity to the cause of suffering humanity. This was the first time in my life that ever I had heard of such people being in existence as the Abolitionists. I supposed that they were a different race of people. He conducted me to the house of one of these warm-hearted friends of God and the slave. I found him willing to aid a poor fugitive on his way to Canada, even to the dividing of the last cent, or morsel of bread if necessary.

These kind friends gave me something to eat, and started me on my way to Canada, with a recommendation to a friend on my way. This was the commencement of what was called the under ground rail road to Canada. I walked with bold courage, trusting in the arm of Omnipotence; guided by the unchangable North Star by night, and inspired by an elevated thought that I was fleeing from a land of slavery and oppression, bidding farewell to hand-cuffs, whips, thumb-screws and chains.

I travelled on until I had arrived at the place where I was directed to call on an Abolitionist, but I made no stop: so great were my fears of being pursued by the pro-slavery hunting dogs of the South. I prosecuted my journey vigorously for nearly forty-eight hours without food or rest, struggling against external difficulties such as no one can imagine who has never experienced the same: not knowing what moment I might be captured while travelling among strangers, through cold and fear, breasting the north winds, being thinly clad, pelted by the snow storms through the dark hours of the night, and not a house in which I could enter to shelter me from the storm.

Excerpt 3: *Pages 74-77. Henry returns to help his wife and child escape, but he is captured by slave hunters. While being guarded by a man named Daniel Lane, he manages to get away.*

In running so swiftly through the public streets, I thought it would be a safer course to leave the public way, and a quick as thought I spied a high board fence by the way and attempted to leap over it. The top board broke and down I came into a hen-coop which stood by the fence. The dogs barked, and the hens flew and cackled so, that I feared it would lead to my detection before I could get out of the yard.

The reader can only imagine how great must have been the excited state of my mind while exposed to such extraordinary peril and danger on every side. In danger of being seized by a savage dog, which sprang at me when I fell into the hen-coop; in danger of being apprehended by the tenants of the lot; in danger of being shot or wounded by any one who might have attempted to stop me, a runaway slave; and in danger on the other hand of being overtaken and getting in conflict with my adversary. With these fearful apprehensions, caution dictated me not to proceed far by day-light in this slaveholding city.

At this moment every nerve and muscle of my whole system was in full stretch; and every faculty of the mind brought into action striving to save myself from being re-captured. I dared not go to the forest, knowing that I might be tracked by blood-hounds, and overtaken. I was so fortunate as to find a hiding place in the city which seemed to be pointed out by the finger of Providence. After running across lots, turning corners, and shunning my fellow men, as if they were wild ferocious beasts, I found a hiding place in a pile of boards or scantling, where I kept concealed during that day.

No tongue nor pen can describe the dreadful apprehensions under which I labored for the space of ten or twelve hours. My hiding place happened to be between two workshops, where there were men at work within six or eight feet of me. I could imagine that I heard them talking about me, and at other times thought I heard the footsteps of Daniel Lane in close pursuit. But I retained my position there until 9 or 10 o'clock at night, without being discovered; after which I attempted to find my way out, which was exceedingly difficult...

.My heart was gladdened to know there was another chance for my escape. No bird ever let out of a cage felt more like flying, than I felt like running.

Excerpt 4: Pages 88-89. Henry returns again to help his family escape; he is captured again and put in jail.

The second night while I was in jail, two slaves came to the dungeon grates about the dead hour of night, and called me to the grates to have some conversation about Canada, and the facilities for getting there. They knew that I had travelled over the road, and they were determined to run away and go where they could be free. I of course took great pleasure in giving them directions how and where to go, and they started in less than a week from that time and got clear to Canada. I have seen them both since I came back to the north myself. They were known by the names of King and Jack.

Excerpt 5: Pages 178,180-181. After Henry's final escape, he travels to Michigan.

The first time that I ever spoke before a public audience, was to give a narration of my own sufferings and adventures, connected with slavery. I commenced in the village of Adrian, State of Michigan, May, 1844. From that up to the present period, the principle part of my time has been faithfully devoted to the cause of freedom--nerved up and encouraged by the sympathy of anti-slavery friends on the one hand, and prompted by a sense of duty to my enslaved countrymen on the other, especially, when I remembered that slavery had robbed me of my freedom--deprived me of education--banished me from my native State, and robbed me of my family...

In the fall of 1844, S. B. Treadwell, of Jackson, and myself, spent two or three months in lecturing through the State of Michigan, upon the abolition of slavery, in a section of country where abolitionists were few and far between. Our meetings were generally appointed in small log cabins, school houses, among the farmers, which were some times crowded full; and where they had no horse teams, it was often the case that there would be four or five ox teams come, loaded down with men, women and children, to attend our meetings.

Excerpt 6: Pages 203-204. At the end of his narrative, Henry offers his thoughts on slavery.

Is it honest or right? Is it doing as we would be done by? Is it in accordance with the principles of humanity or justice?

I believe slaveholding to be a sin... under all circumstances. I have no sympathy with the person or persons who tolerate and support the system...

ANALYSIS WORKSHEET PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES ON HENRY BIBB

Primary Source: Photograph

- What do you notice first about the photograph?
- What do you notice that you didn't expect?
- What do you notice that you can't explain?
- When do you think this photo might have been taken?
- What role do you think Henry Bibb played in the Underground Railroad?

Secondary Source: Informational Article

- What was Henry Bibb's childhood like?
- What events involving his daughter convinced him to escape?
- After escaping to Ohio, why did Henry return to Kentucky? Was he successful in his mission?
- Who helped Henry in his quest for freedom?
- After his final escape, how did Henry help others who were still enslaved?
- What personality traits did Henry show? Give evidence from the article.

Primary Source: Personal Narrative of Henry Bibb

- How does Henry feel about slavery? Give specific sentences from the excerpts that express his opinion.
- Describe hardships or dangers that Henry faced in his quest for freedom.
- When and how was Henry helped by the Underground Railroad? Give details.
- How did Henry help others seeking freedom from slavery? Give details.
- This narrative is written in the first person (Henry Bibb is talking.) How does this affect the emotion of the source?
- Why do you think Henry wrote this narrative?
- Does reading this narrative change your perception of Henry Bibb? If so, how?