



UNIT 2

**DEHUMANIZATION—  
ENSLAVED  
PEOPLE**

# What is chattel slavery and how did it dehumanize Black people?

From the 17th–19th centuries, 12.5 million<sup>1</sup> enslaved Africans were brought from Central and West Africa to the Americas. The colonial system of slavery—which was practiced in all of the original 13 British colonies—is referred to as *chattel slavery*. In this system, enslaved people were the personal property of their owners for life, a source of labor or a commodity that could be willed, traded or sold like livestock or furniture.

Enslaved people were exploited as unpaid labor to build the British colonies and the new American nation. Enslaved labor cleared forests, raised bridges and built ships and mansions, including the White House. It was common to see enslaved Africans toiling in port cities, factories and on large plantations and modest farms.

Enslavers had complete control over the bodies and lives of those they enslaved, as well as their children. Enslaved people could be bought and sold at any time, for any reason. Families were, therefore, often wrenched apart as enslaved people were transferred to the highest bidder. Most enslaved people were trapped in bondage until they died.

Though white supremacy buttressed the institution of slavery, financial gain was its architect. Chattel slavery was one of the most profitable institutions in history, delivering phenomenal wealth and social and political power to certain segments of U.S. society. By 1860, “the nearly 4 million American slaves were worth some \$3.5 billion, making them the largest single financial asset in the entire U.S. economy, worth more than all manufacturing and railroads combined.”<sup>2</sup>

Slavery predominated in the South, where the plantocracy built southern economies on the backs of enslaved labor as they endured punishing work in the cotton, sugar and tobacco fields. Prior to the Civil War, there were more millionaires in Mississippi than in any other part of the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Though all Northern states passed legislation to abolish slavery by 1804,<sup>4</sup> the region remained complicit in slavery: Northern factories processed products cultivated by enslaved people, Northern timber was used for barrels to transport southern crops, Northern financial firms invested in Southern enterprises and Northern insurance companies insured enslaved people. Slavery, and its various tentacles, commodified Black bodies in every fathomable way, in every region and at every stage of their lives.

In 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared freedom for the enslaved people of the Confederacy—3.1 million of the 4 million enslaved people in the U.S. at that time. Slavery was finally abolished nationwide with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865. In writing about the 300-year period in which Europeans, and then Americans, violently and unreluctantly subordinated Black and indigenous peoples to their unrestrained greed and power, the columnist Matthew Desmond observed: “Given the choice between modernity and barbarism, prosperity and poverty, lawfulness and cruelty, democracy and totalitarianism, America chose all of the above.”<sup>5</sup>

1 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “How Many Slaves Landed in the US?” PBS.com, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/how-many-slaves-landed-in-the-us>.

2 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Slavery Made America,” *The Atlantic*, June 24, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288>.

3 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Slavery Made America.”

4 Christopher Klein, “Deeper Roots of Northern Slavery Unearthed,” History.com, February 5, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/deeper-roots-of-northern-slavery-unearthed>.

5 Matthew Desmond, “In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation,” *The New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>.

# THE WORTH OF A SLAVE



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What was chattel slavery? How did hopes and dreams help Black Americans get through difficult times?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn what chattel slavery is and how it was practiced in the United States.
- Explore a fictionalized account of a plantation and its enslaved people, and create a visual response to it.
- Discuss the inherent dignity of all people and the injustice of treating human beings like property.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- *Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life* by Ashley Bryan (book)
- *Freedom Over Me Quilt Square* handout (one per student)
- Squares of paper and drawing implements (crayons, markers, colored pencils)



## VOCABULARY

chattel slavery

enslaved

enslaver

resistance

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

**1** Hold up an ordinary object for the class to see (e.g., a book, a chair, a backpack, etc.). Ask students what they think the object is worth, and come to an agreement on the value. Comment that the object can be bought, sold, traded or given away by the owner at the agreed-upon price.

**2** Tell students they will hear the story of a time in the U.S. when—just like the object—human beings were bought, sold, traded or given away without their permission by other people at an agreed-upon price. Write the following term on the board and review the definition with students:

Chattel Slavery: A system of enslavement in which people are considered the property of their owners for life. Under chattel slavery, people could be bought, sold, traded or inherited, and their treatment was similar to that of cattle—cows, goats, sheep etc.

## NOTE

Chattel slavery is the most common form of slavery known to Americans, but it is just one of many ways people have sought to own and control the lives of others. Other examples of slavery include forced labor, bonded or debt labor, child slavery, and domestic servitude. See the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center’s page on “Modern Abolition” for more information:

<https://freedomcenter.org/enabling-freedom/five-forms-of-slavery>.

**3** Conduct a read-aloud of *Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life* by Ashley Bryan. Read the first page about the English widow, Mrs. Mary Fairchilds, and make sure students understand what it means that she is having her “estate appraised.” Show the photo on the next page of the book of the 11 enslaved people and the values assigned to their lives. Pause to allow students to react to this image, either through a think-pair-share or a minute of reflective writing. Discuss their feelings about seeing monetary values attached to human lives.

**4** Continue reading the sections of the book describing each enslaved person’s life and their dreams. Explore some of the following themes and questions during and after reading:

- What skills and abilities do the people in the story have? How do they get comfort from their talents, even though their work profits only their enslavers?
- Peggy says her people were “stripped of everything, our language, our customs, they even took our names.” Betty says: “The owners say we have no history.” How do the enslaved people find ways to remember and share their histories and traditions?
- What things make them most afraid? Most angry?
- How do they help, support and teach one another, especially the youngest among them?
- Why was learning to read a crime for enslaved people?
- Qush asks himself how he could “breathe moments of joy into our driven lives.” How do Qush and others find ways to feel humanity and happiness even though they are treated like property?
- Betty says: “Within us lives this undefeated pride.” How do they stay proud even when their enslavers try to make them feel like they don’t matter?
- How do thoughts of escaping to freedom enter into their daily lives? What were the risks of trying to escape?
- Athelia says: “Our real lives are our precious secret,” Bacus says: “Our lives are within.” What do they mean?
- What are examples of the people’s resistance to being enslaved?


**2**

#### NOTE

In *Freedom Over Me* (Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2016), the author gives expression to the inner lives of 11 enslaved people. Though the stories are imagined, the people are real, as evidenced by slave auction and plantation estate documents that are woven into the book’s illustrations. The verse interprets each person’s life on the plantation, followed by an articulation of their hopes and dreams. The contrast between the monetary value placed on the enslaved people’s lives and the pricelessness of their humanity frames the cruelty of chattel slavery. A read-aloud of this book is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_wG8PUcAk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_wG8PUcAk).

#### NOTE

As conversations about the individual characters progress, prepare for a range of emotions, from anger to sadness to disbelief. Create a safe space as students struggle with the historical content. Emphasize that the students’ reactions are timeless—many enslaved people and those who fought against chattel slavery shared these emotions.

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- 5 Remind students that in the book, Jane is a talented seamstress who is sought after for her work with textiles and cloth. Tell students that many women sewed quilts during the time of this story. Share that, though it's not certain, some historians believe quilts contained secret codes that provided freedom seekers with directions. Enslaved people on the run could memorize the blocks in quilts hung on clothes lines and from windows, and use this information to find shelter and safety.
  - 6 Tell students that together the class will create a quilt in response to *Freedom Over Me*. Distribute a square of paper and the handout, *Freedom Over Me Quilt Square*, to each student. Have them choose one of the options on the handout and design a square by drawing, writing, creating a collage or using another method. When they are done, allow students to share their squares in small groups before assembling them and displaying the quilt in the classroom.

# Discussion Questions

- 1 How did it feel for you to learn about the experiences of enslaved people and to consider what their private thoughts, feelings and dreams might have been?
- 2 Why do you think it was important for the people in *Freedom Over Me* to hope, dream and plan for their liberty, even though they were enslaved?
- 3 What do you think it felt like for enslaved people to have a price tag put on them?
- 4 How did enslaved people keep their pride, history and humanity, even when their enslavers tried to take these things from them?
- 5 Though chattel slavery in the United States no longer exists, inequality for Black Americans is still a problem. What examples of inequality today do you know about?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "What Is Owed." *NY Times Magazine*, June 26, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/24/magazine/reparations-slavery.html>.
- + Primary Source Pairings. "Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life by Ashley Bryan." <https://primarysourcepairings.com/freedom-over-me>.
- + Teaching Books. "Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life by Ashley Bryan." <https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=51319>.
- + Teaching Tolerance. "Teaching Hard History American Slavery Podcast," Episode 4, Season 2: In the Elementary Classroom. <https://www.tolerance.org/podcasts/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery/in-the-elementary-classroom>.



# Freedom Over Me Quilt Square

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one of the ideas below and design a quilt square showing your thoughts and feelings about the people in *Freedom Over Me*. You can create your square by drawing, writing, creating a collage or using another method.

Create a square that speaks to one of the people in the book and recognizes their skills and talents.

Create a square that expresses your feelings about slavery and treating people like chattel or property.

Create a square that illustrates the hopes and dreams of one or more of the people in the book.

Create a square that celebrates the culture or traditions of the enslaved people's African homeland.

Create a square that explains to Mrs. Fairchilds why it's wrong to put a price on human life.

Create a square that shows what freedom meant to the people in the book or what it means to you today.



# SLAVERY BUILT AMERICA



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

If America is considered the “land of the free,” what does it mean that the White House was built by enslaved labor?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore the role of enslaved labor in the building of Washington, D.C. and the White House.
- Analyze a primary source document demonstrating the use of enslaved labor to build the White House.
- Create a fictionalized narrative taking into account the point of view of an enslaved person.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video
- *Who Worked? Who Got Paid?* handout (one per student)
- *The House That Slavery Built: Daniel's Story* handout (one per student)



## VOCABULARY

bondage	enslaver	overseer
enslaved	labor/laborer	servitude

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

- 1** Project a photo of the White House. Have students do a think-pair-share in response to the following questions:
  - What building do you think this is, and who do you think lives there?
  - How long ago do you think this building was constructed?
  - Who do you think built it?
- 2** Reveal that the building is the White House and ask students what it symbolizes for them. Share that the construction of the White House took place from 1792 to 1800, and that most of the work was done by enslaved people (the work force also included free Black people, immigrants, and local white laborers). Ask students if they are surprised to learn that enslaved people built the White House.
- 3** Have students fold a sheet of paper in half and label the columns “The Workers” and “The President and First Lady.” Tell them that they will be watching a video clip that imagines the first time President John Adams and First Lady Abigail Adams visited the White House. Instruct them to take notes or sketch what stands out to them most about each group (e.g., their environment, physical appearance, mood, reactions, etc.). Show the clip from HBO’s *John Adams, Part 6—Unnecessary War* (3:27): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOPE\\_kC-3EY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOPE_kC-3EY).

## NOTE

The clip depicts a fictionalized scene based on historian David McCullough’s biography, *John Adams*. In this segment, John and Abigail Adams travel through Washington, D.C., under heavy construction, and express their disapproval at the use of enslaved labor.

- 4** In pairs, have students share some of their observations and what most stood out to them. As a class, discuss some of the following questions:
- What did you notice about the type of work being done and the conditions for the laborers?
  - What did you notice about the body language and facial expressions of President and Abigail Adams? What do you think they were thinking as they approached the White House?
  - How did you interpret the first lady's questions: "Half-fed slaves building our nation's capital? What possible good can come from such a place?"
  - Did you know that enslaved people helped to build the White House? How do you feel about this?
  - How does the idea of enslaved people building our nation's capital go against the beliefs our country was built on?
- 5** Ask students: "How do you think we know that enslaved people built the White House?" Distribute the handout, *Who Worked? Who Got Paid?* and have students fold it so the transcribed text is hidden. Encourage them to decipher the 18th century handwriting before reading the text transcription and answering the accompanying questions.
- 6** Share that there are very few historical documents about the enslaved people who helped to construct the nation's most important buildings besides receipts, like this one, drawn up when their enslavers "rented" them out. Ask students why they think there are so few historical documents related to enslaved people and the building of Washington, D.C.

**NOTE**

This primary source document, from the National Archives, is a voucher for James Clagett for payment for work by "Negro George" for five months and three days (July-December 1794) at the "President's House." In today's dollars, the sum paid is the equivalent of approximately \$1,300-\$2,000.

## NOTE

As students write their original story endings, guide them to be realistic and to draw upon what they have learned about chattel slavery. Gently redirect students who may want to write an overly idealistic resolution (e.g., the enslaved people all get freed). Make certain to read students' writing and to discuss as a class which outcomes would have been possible and which would not. Use this writing exercise as a way to deepen students' thinking about slavery and to increase empathy for the people who endured it.

7

Tell students we do know that White House designer James Hoban “rented” out three enslaved people, one of whom was named Daniel. In pairs or small groups, have students read the fictionalized account, *The House That Slavery Built: Daniel's Story*, and complete the ending as directed on the handout. When they are done, have two groups join together and share their endings with each other.

8

To conclude the lesson, read aloud the 2016 remarks below from First Lady Michelle Obama or show a video clip of the speech (1:10): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHnj2sTIVUJ>. Discuss or have students write a reflection on what these words from our country's only Black first lady means to them.

*That is the story of this country, the story that has brought me to this stage tonight, the story of generations of people who felt the lash of bondage, the shame of servitude, the sting of segregation, but who kept on striving and hoping and doing what needed to be done so that today I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves. And I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent, Black young women, playing with their dogs on the White House lawn.*

# Discussion Questions

1

In 1776 the words “all men are created equal” were written in the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

- Why do you think the U.S. government, founded on freedom, chose to use enslaved labor to build its new capital?
- What do you think the enslaved people who built the White House thought about this promise of equality?

2

What might it have felt like for Black people who worked in the White House after it was built?

3

How has your feeling about what the White House symbolizes changed?

4

What do you think it means for our country that the White House and our nation was built on enslaved labor?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Arneback, Bob. *Slave Labor in the Capital*. <http://capitalslaves.blogspot.com/2014/10/publication-date-for-my-book-is.html>.
- + Barria, Carlos and Brice, Makini. “Built by my family: America’s grand buildings built by slaves.” *Reuters*. <https://widerimage.reuters.com/story/built-by-my-family-americas-grand-buildings-built-by-slaves>.
- + Geiger, Beth. “Building the White House.” *Kids Discover*. February 9, 2015. <https://www.kidsdiscover.com/teacherresources/building-white-house>.
- + Lewis, Danny. “The White House Was, in Fact, Built by Slaves.” *Smithsonian.com*, July 26, 2016. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/white-house-was-fact-built-slaves-180959916>.
- + Lusane, Clarence. *The Black History of the White House*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2013.
- + Peterson, Bob, “Presidents and the Enslaved: Helping Students Find the Truth.” *Zinn Education Project*. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/presidents-and-slaves-helping-students-find-the-truth>.
- + White House Historical Association. “Slavery and the White House.” <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/search?q=slavery+and+the+white+house>.

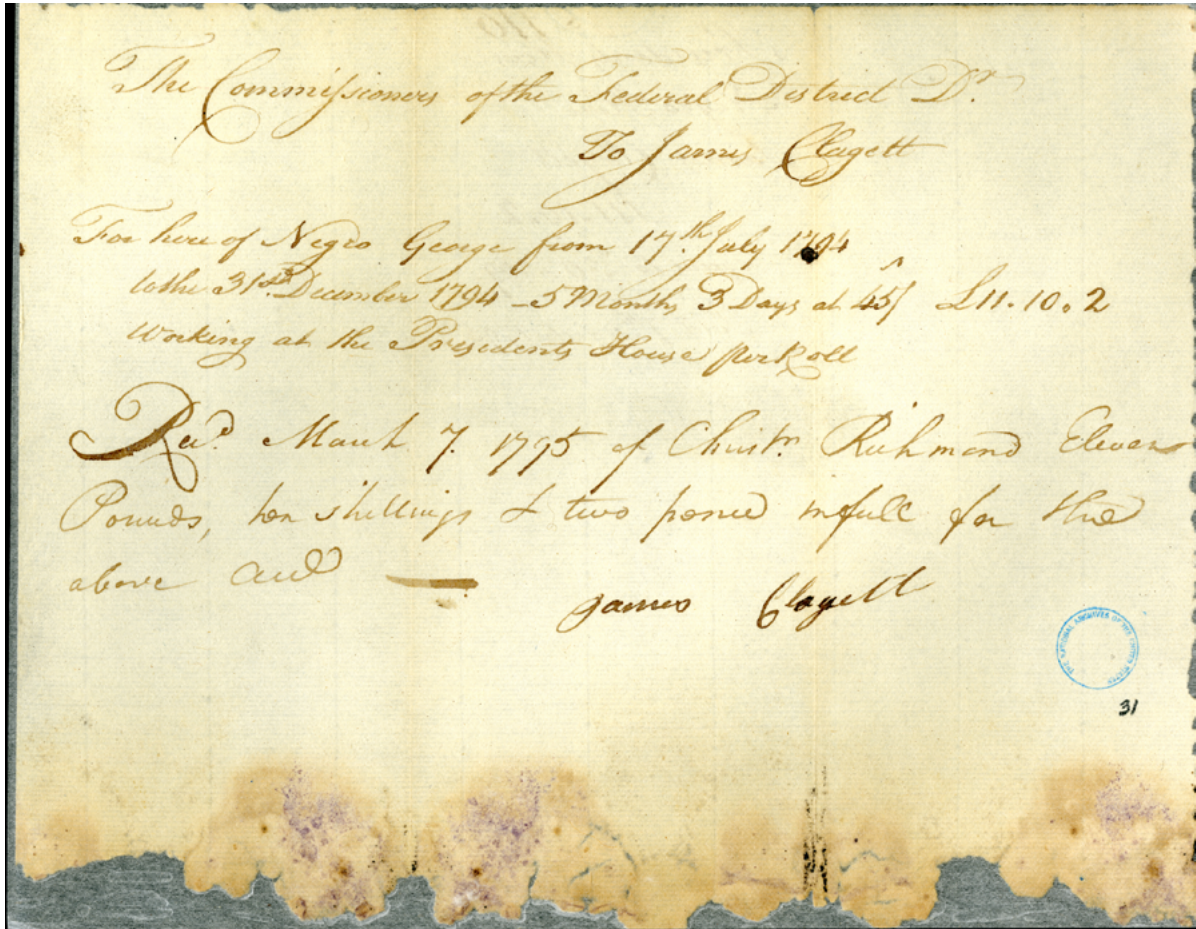
2



# Who Worked? Who Got Paid?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Fold this page to hide the text below the document. Can you read it? What does it tell us?



The Commissioners of the Federal District D  
To James Clagett

For hire of Negro George from 17th July 1794  
through 31 December 1794-5 Month, 3 Days at 45 £ 11.10.2\*  
working at the Presidents House payroll

Received March 7, 1795 of Christian Richmond Eleven  
Pounds, ten shillings & two pence in full for the  
above [?]

James Clagett

\*NOTE: £ 11.10.2 or eleven pounds, ten shillings and two pence is between  
\$1,300 and \$2,000 in today's money.



# Who Worked? Who Got Paid?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is the laborer? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where is the laborer working? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Who is getting paid? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Who is paying? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Put it all together: What does this document tell us about enslaved people and the U.S. government?

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# The House That Slavery Built: Daniel's Story

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

This story is a fictional account of Daniel's experience building the White House based on historical references. After reading the story, work with your group to write an ending for it. Write at least one paragraph.

"Get up Daniel!" I felt a kick on the bottom of my bare feet. It felt like I had just fallen asleep, but here it is, morning already, and I have to get up. I brush some dust off my pants as I get up from the ground where I slept. We have to sleep close to the area where we work, to keep an eye on all our tools that we use to make bricks. It used to be pretty hard to fall asleep on the ground, but I am used to it by now. It isn't all that different from the shack on my master's plantation.

For some reason, today the overseer woke us up even before the sun came up. I don't know why. I am still pretty tired, trying to gather my thoughts and wait

for instructions on what to do. I believe today President Adams is going to visit to check our work and see how things are coming along. I guess that's why we are up so early, to get ready for his visit. He's the most important man in the land now. And I believe this house is for him, so it has to be just right. He's probably gonna see if he likes it. I hope he does, 'cause we been working on these bricks for a long time, months I think.

Some days, my hands bleed from handling all those big rocks all day. And we're usually working from the time the sun comes up until it goes down again. Ain't none of us seen our kinfolk in

months. All we got to talk to is each other, and all we talk about is missing our kinfolk. Some of us even have wives and kids. We're all praying that they don't get sold off before we get back. Some of the men have been wondering if they're gonna free us when we get done, if the president likes it, and if he thinks we did good work. I don't believe they will, but some of them have hope.

**GLOSSARY:**

- Overseer: the person watching over the enslaved people and directing their work
- Kinfolk: relatives
- Master: title for the person who owns enslaved people

*Daniel's Story* is a fictionalized account written by Dr. Donnetrice Allison.

Choose one of the following options for your story:

- Someone gets sick or hurt on the job site.
- The enslaved people leave clues about their contribution to the construction of the White House.
- Daniel returns home after the job is done. What does he find?

**COMPLETE THE STORY**

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# THE WORTH OF A SLAVE



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What is chattel slavery and how did it dehumanize Black people? What was the relationship between chattel slavery and economics in the U.S.?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explain the difference between slavery and chattel slavery.
- Create a graph showing the growth of chattel slavery in the U.S. between 1790 and 1860.
- Investigate the economics of slavery, specifically the relationship between slavery and the cotton industry.
- Analyze primary documents on slave auctions and the commodifying of Black people.
- Discuss and reflect on the dehumanization required for the practice of chattel slavery.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60–90 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video
- *To the Highest Bidder* handout (one copy to project)
- *Chattel Slavery* handout (one copy per student)
- *Bought and Sold* handout (one copy per student)



## VOCABULARY

auction	dehumanize	enslaver	The Weeping Time
chattel slavery	enslaved	transatlantic slave trade	

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## PART I

### Defining a Cruel Institution (20 minutes)

- 1** Project the handout depicting the painting *To the Highest Bidder*. Ask students to reflect on the image and the questions below as a “quick-write” or by discussing with a partner. Then provide context on the painting (see the NOTE) and allow students to share some of their reactions.
  - Who are these people and what might be happening to them? How do you know?
  - What is the meaning of the painting’s title?
  - What might the people in the painting be feeling? How do they make you feel? Explain.
- 2** Comment that the type of slavery practiced in the United States was a particularly inhumane form called *chattel slavery*. Independently or as a class, have students review the two definitions on the handout, *Chattel Slavery*, and create a Venn diagram comparing them.
- 3** Share the following facts with students. Then ask what they think drove the investment of huge sums of money in slavery. What made this abhorrent practice a “big business” during the 1700s and 1800s?
  - The average cost of an enslaved person at auction in the United States was about \$400 in the 1850s (approximately \$13,000 in today’s money).<sup>1</sup>

## NOTE

New York artist Harry Herman Roseland (c.1867–1950) was known for his paintings depicting poor Black Americans. *To the Highest Bidder* portrays a pre-Civil War scene of a mother and daughter about to be separated by a slave auction. A post on the website *Jubilo! The Emancipation Century*, notes: “I am taken by the somber desperation in the eyes of the mother. Her gaze seems to both shame and challenge the viewer: how can you look at me, and know what is about to happen, and yet do nothing?” (<https://jubiloemancipationcentury.wordpress.com/tag/harry-herman-roseland>)

<sup>1</sup> CPI Inflation calculator, <https://www.officialdata.org>; Williamson, Samuel H. and Cain, Louis P. “Measuring Slavery in 2016 Dollars.” MeasuringWorth.com. <https://www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php>.

- About a third of all Southerners enslaved Black people. Of the 46,300 plantations that existed in 1860, about half had 20 or fewer enslaved people; 45 percent had 20–30, five percent had 100–500, and a smaller number 500–1,000.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the 1860 census, 4 million enslaved people lived in the U.S. (This was 89 percent of all people of African descent in the U.S.) Their value was about \$3.5 billion at the time.<sup>3</sup>

## PART II

### The Economics of Slavery (30 minutes)

- 4** Tell students that Southern landowners knew they could make huge profits from crops like cotton and tobacco, but these crops required a lot of people to work the land. Enslaved labor provided a cheap (though morally costly) solution to their problem. As an example of this slavery-driven economy, show students the following PBS video and debrief using the questions below: “African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross—The Cotton Economy” (3:03)—[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRIfMhP\\_CMI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRIfMhP_CMI).
- What was the relationship between cotton and chattel slavery?
  - How did the desire for cotton affect Native American people?
  - How did all white Americans—not just Southerners—profit from slavery?
  - What facts or images stood out to you most? How did they make you feel?

#### NOTE

In *The New York Times Magazine* article “What Is Owed,” Nikole Hannah-Jones (drawing on Ta-Nehisi Coates) writes: “Racism is the child of economic profiteering, not the father.” During this lesson, help students understand that economic systems and the desire for wealth drove slavery, and that racist ideology grew from this as a rationale for the brutal practice.

2 Pruitt, Sarah. “5 Myths About Slavery.” *History.com*, May 3, 2016. <https://www.history.com/news/5-myths-about-slavery>; National Humanities Center. “Enslavement/Plantation.” <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/enslavement.htm>.

3 Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “Slavery Made America.” *The Atlantic*, June 24, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288>.

- 5** Project the interactive map, "The Spread of U.S. Slavery, 1790–1860": <https://lincolnmullen.com/projects/slavery>. Briefly click on each decade (1790, 1800, 1810, etc.) so students can observe the expansion of slavery over this 70-year period. Roll the cursor over any area to show students how the statistics for particular counties come into view. In small groups, have students create a graph comparing two counties, one Northern and one Southern (include your own county if possible). Direct them to plot the total number of enslaved people for each county at three points in time—1800, 1830 and 1860. Give students access to laptops or tablets to gather the data, or post the data on the board if this technology is not available.

### PART III

## Human Beings for Sale (30 minutes)

- 6** Play the following audio clip of Fountain Hughes, a former enslaved person, reflecting on the buying and selling of Black people: "1619," Episode 1: The Fight for a True Democracy (10:40–11:31): <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/podcasts/1619-podcast.html>. (A transcription of the clip is included in the handout *Bought and Sold*.) Discuss the following:

- How did it feel to hear about a human being treated like an animal or other possession (chattel)?
- What mindset or motivation do you think it took for white people to dehumanize Black individuals in this way?
- What is your reaction to Fountain's comment that he "doesn't like to talk about it, because it makes people feel bad"? Why is it important that we talk about slavery today, more than 150 years after it was abolished?

#### NOTE

"1619" is a *New York Times* audio series that examines the long shadow of American slavery. Fountain Hughes (1848–1957) was born into slavery in Virginia and remained enslaved until the end of the Civil War, in 1865. His interview is part of *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*, which contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery collected in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

**7** Share that one of the largest auctions of enslaved people was held on a racetrack near Savannah, Georgia, in 1859. Due to the steady rain throughout the two-day sale and devastation to the 436 affected families, the event came to be known as “the weeping time” because it was said that the heavens were weeping over the inhumanity. Distribute the handout *Bought and Sold* to each student. In small groups, instruct them to read at least two of the narratives from enslaved people and to review the slave auction illustration and poster on the following pages. Have them discuss and record their response to the following prompts:

- Describe what you imagine a slave auction was like—the sights, the sounds, the people present and their thoughts and feelings.
- What details did you notice in the interviews and images that reveal the inhumanity of slave auctions?
- Enslaved people called the Georgia auction “the weeping time.” What name would you give to the time in history in which we allowed the buying and selling of human beings?

**8** Conclude the lesson by returning to the painting *To the Highest Bidder*. Share the following post from an online commentator (see step 1 for attribution): “Her gaze seems to both shame and challenge the viewer: How can you look at me, and know what is about to happen, and yet do nothing?” Have students choose one of the following voices and write a brief reflection in that voice, exploring what might have motivated people’s actions in response to slavery in the 19th century:

- I look at you and see only property to be bought and sold...
- I look at you and it pains me, but there is nothing I can do...
- I look at you and feel a sense of personal responsibility to do something...

# Discussion Questions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Slavery Made America." *The Atlantic*, June 24, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288>.
- + Desmond, Matthew. "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation." *NY Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>.
- + Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "What Is Owed." *NY Times Magazine*, June 26, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/24/magazine/reparations-slavery.html>.
- + History.com. "Roots: A History Revealed—The Slave Auction." February 27, 2017. YouTube video, 3:02. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2lwAd0qrWo>.
- + USA Today. "Slavery's explosive growth, in charts: How '20 and odd' became millions." <https://www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/1619-african-slavery-history-maps-routes-interactive-graphic>.

- 1 What are the beliefs behind chattel slavery that made it so terribly brutal?
- 2 What do you think were the primary motivations leading white individuals and the U.S. government to support slavery for over 200 years?
- 3 What does it mean to dehumanize a person or group? Why did chattel slavery *have to* dehumanize Black people?
- 4 How did enslaved and other Black people resist being dehumanized?
- 5 How did it feel to hear/read interviews in which former enslaved people share their experiences in their own words?
- 6 How do you think slavery might still affect our country more than 150 years after the Civil War? Is there anything ordinary people or the government can do to deal with these problems today?

## Lesson Extensions

- Have students listen to the section of "1619," the New York Times audio series, that explores the cotton economy and its relationship to slavery: Episode 2—The Economy That Slavery Built (7:05-13:35): <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/podcasts/1619-podcast.html>.
- Have students listen to additional audio clips from *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*. The interview of Aunt Phoebe Boyd (Dunnsville, Virginia, 1935) includes a section on picking cotton: [https://www.loc.gov/item/afc1984011\\_afs25752b](https://www.loc.gov/item/afc1984011_afs25752b).
- Have students research the ways in which the economics of the textile industry continue to encourage human rights violations in today's world. For example, see the PBS/POV film "Made in L.A.," and accompanying lesson plan on "Labor Practices in the Garment Industry": <http://archive.pov.org/madeinla>.



## *To the Highest Bidder* by Harry Herman Roseland (1906)



Oil on canvas, 60 x 32 in., Oprah Winfrey collection, picture source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/eoskins/27936673892>



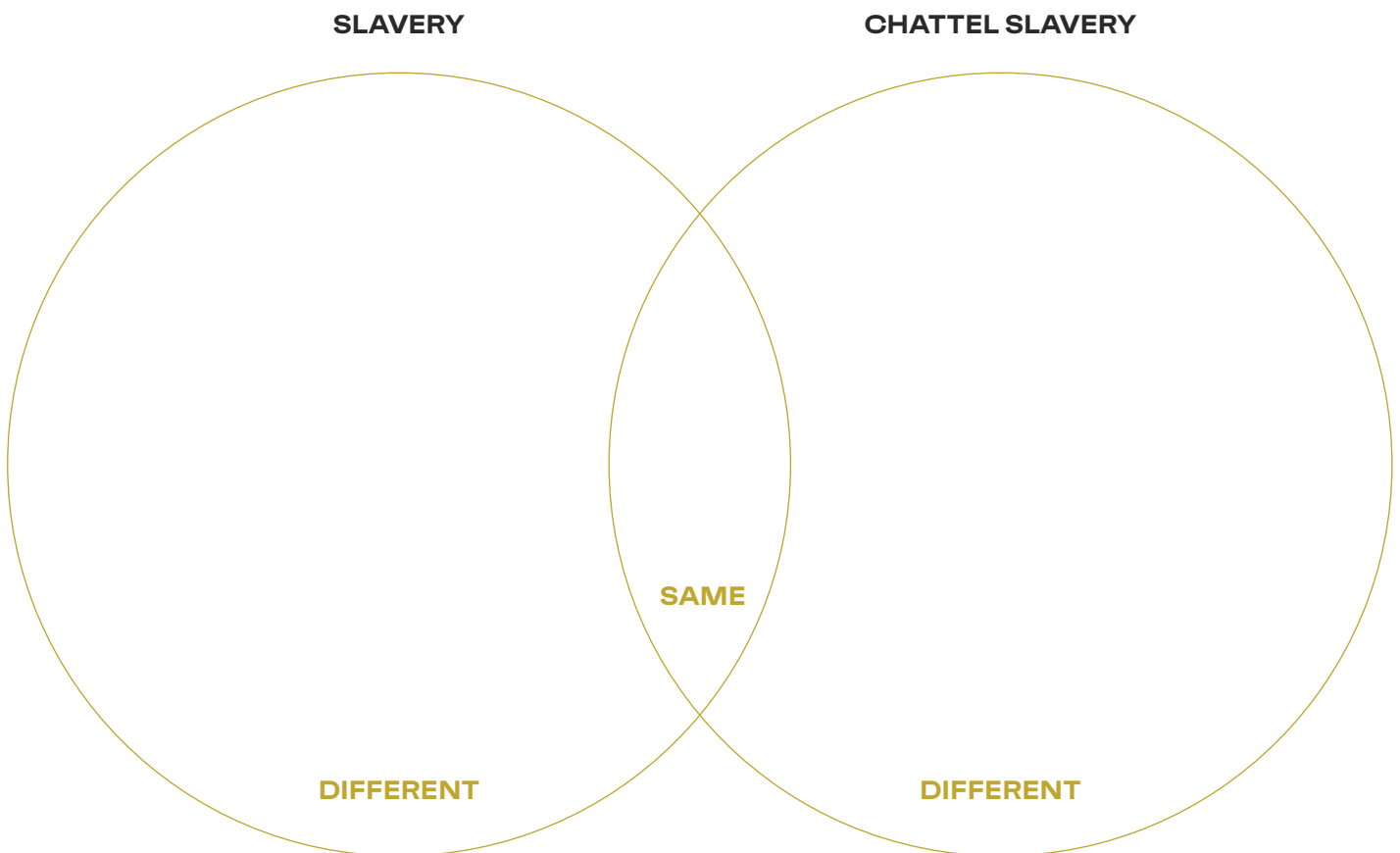
# Chattel Slavery

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the definitions below. Then fill in the Venn diagram with examples of ways in which the types of slavery described are similar and different.

**SLAVERY:** Slavery is a condition in which a person is owned by another person. Slavery was historically practiced in the ancient world when conquerors would enslave the people they defeated. Very often, enslaved males were murdered and females worked for the conquerors. Enslaved people were owned, but had the ability to become a part of the community through marriage and/or owning property. This type of slavery was not primarily driven by profit. Enslaved people were seen as humans of a lower status.

**CHATEL SLAVERY:** Chattel slavery is a condition in which enslaved Africans were viewed as personal possessions, the equivalent of livestock or furniture. These “possessions” had a monetary worth and generated wealth for enslavers and for white society. In this system, enslaved people had no rights or privileges and were unlikely to be freed. This form of slavery was practiced in the Americas and was a result of the transatlantic slave trade. The enslaved people were seen as less than human.







# Bought and Sold

The excerpts below are from “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936–1938.” The collection contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 photographs of former enslaved people, and can be found at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection>.

**Fountain Hughes, Baltimore, Maryland, Age 101** (at time of interview)

“My name is Fountain Hughes. I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia. My grandfather belonged to Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather was 115 years old when he died, and now I am 101 year old. Now in my boy days, we were slaves. We belonged to people. They’d sell us like they sell horses and cows and hogs and all like that, have an auction bench. Put you up on the bench and bid on you the same as you’re bidding on cattle, you know. But still, I don’t like to talk about it, because it makes people feel bad.”



**Hannah Travis, Little Rock, Arkansas, Age 73**

“Didn’t nobody have any rights then. They would just put ‘em up on a block and auction them off. The one that give the most he would take ‘em. Didn’t nobody have no schooling only white folks. The white children would go to school but they didn’t allow [Black children] to go.”

**Will Ann Rogers, Brinkley, Arkansas, Age 70**

“When ma was a young woman, she said they put her on a block and sold her. They auctioned her off at Richmond, Virginia. When they sold her, her mother fainted or dropped dead, she never knowed which. She wanted to go see her mother lying over there on the ground and the man what bought her wouldn’t let her. He just took her on. Drove her off like cattle, I reckon. The man what bought her was Ephram Hester. That the last she ever knowed of any of her folks. She say he mated ‘em like stock so she had one boy. He livin’ down here at Helena now. He is Mose Kent. He was born around Richmond, Virginia jes’ lack dat she say.”

**Violet Shaw, West Memphis, Arkansas, Age 50**

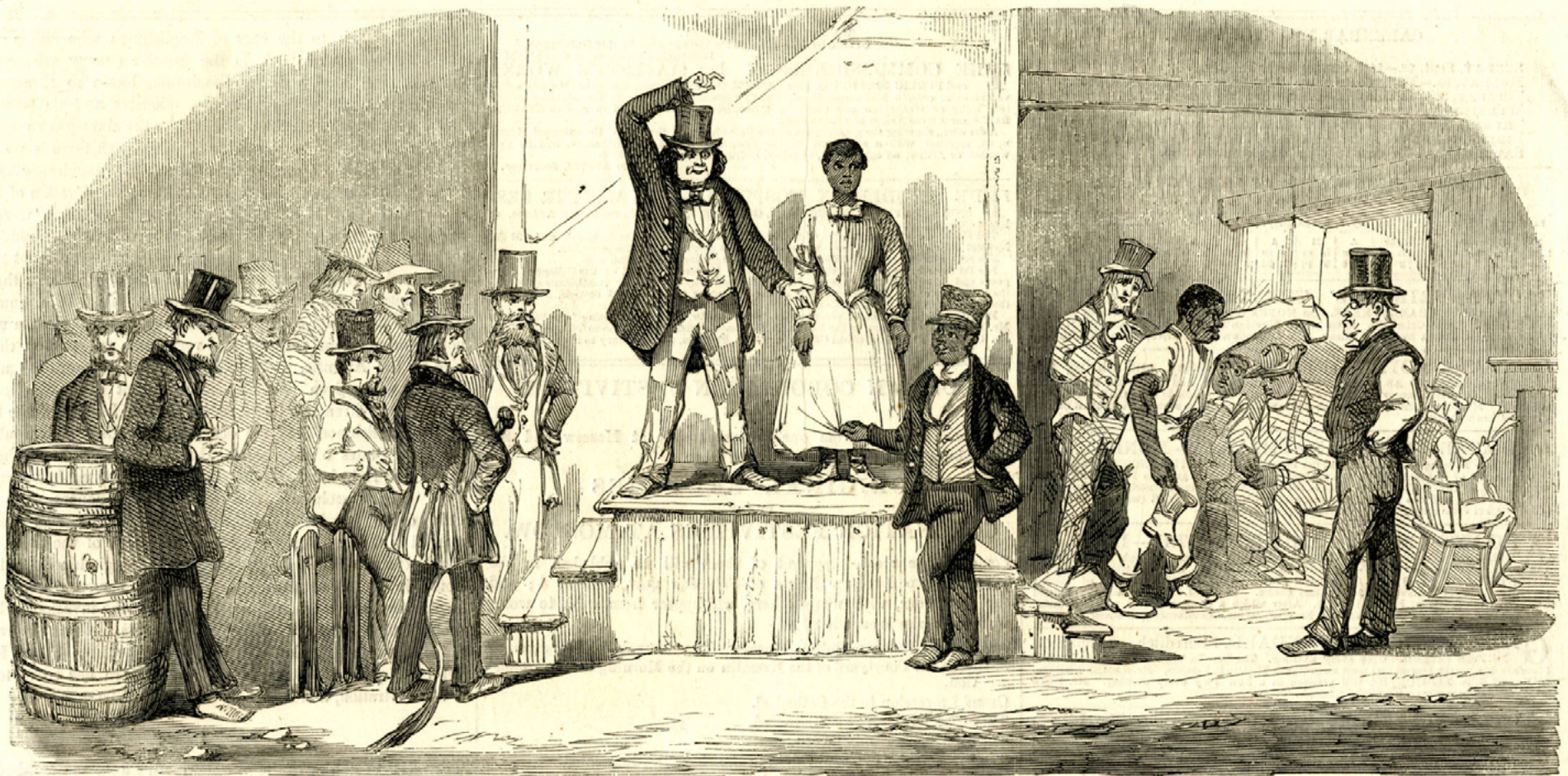
“I heard Grandma Katie Williams say she was put up on a high stump and auctioned off. She told how great-grandma cried and cried and never seen her no more. Grandma come from Oakland, Tennessee to Mississippi. Grandma took the two young children and left the other two with great-grandma. They took her from her husband. She never seen none of them again. After freedom she didn’t know how to find them. She never could get trace of them. She tried. She never married no more.”

**William Henry Rooks, Brinkley, Arkansas, Age 84**

“Some of the white men had a hundred slaves and had plenty money. The war broke nearly all of them. The very worse thing I ever knowed about it was some white men raised hands to sell like they raise stock now. It was hard to have your child took off and never see or hear tell of it. Mean man buy it and beat it up. Some of them was drove off to be sold at auction at New Orleans. That was where some took them ‘cause they could get big money for them.”

Photograph of Fountain Hughes courtesy of The Jeffersonian newspaper, Towson, Maryland.  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FountainHughes.jpg>.

# Bought and Sold: Slave Auction at Richmond, Virginia



SLAVE AUCTION AT RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.



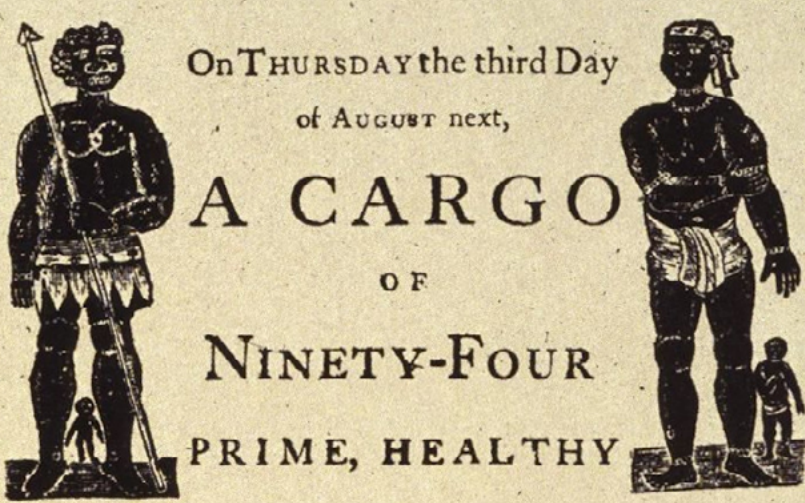
## Bought and Sold: Reproduction of a handbill advertising a slave auction in Charleston, South Carolina, 1769

Charlestown, July 24th, 1769.

TO BE SOLD,

On THURSDAY the third Day  
of AUGUST next,

A CARGO  
OF  
NINETY-FOUR  
PRIME, HEALTHY



NEGROES,

CONSISTING OF  
Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS,  
Twenty-four WOMEN, and  
Sixteen GIRLS.

JUST ARRIVED,  
In the Brigantine *DEMBIA*, *Francis Bare*, Master, from SIERRA-  
LEON, by  
DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

SOURCE: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Slave\\_Auction\\_Ad.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Slave_Auction_Ad.jpg)

# SLAVERY'S ENDURING MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why do the myths and misconceptions about slavery continue? How does the language we use to talk about difficult subjects perpetuate historical myths?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Analyze problematic language used to discuss slavery and formulate more appropriate alternatives.
- Explore persistent myths about slavery and how they perpetuate damaging beliefs and stereotypes.
- Interpret and explain arguments concerning misconceptions about slavery.
- Evaluate their own education with respect to slavery and enslaved people.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- *Slavery in the United States: Stubborn Myths in Brief* handout (one copy to read aloud)
- Copies of the following handouts, one set for each small group:
  - Myth: They Didn't Know Better*
  - Myth: They Were Powerless to Resist*
  - Myth: The Civil War was about States' Rights*



## VOCABULARY

13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	enslaved	manumission	states' rights
abolition	enslaver	plantation	Underground Railroad
chattel	fugitive	resistance/cultural and spiritual resistance	white supremacy
Confederate States of America	insurgency	secede/secession	
emancipation	Jim Crow		

# Procedures

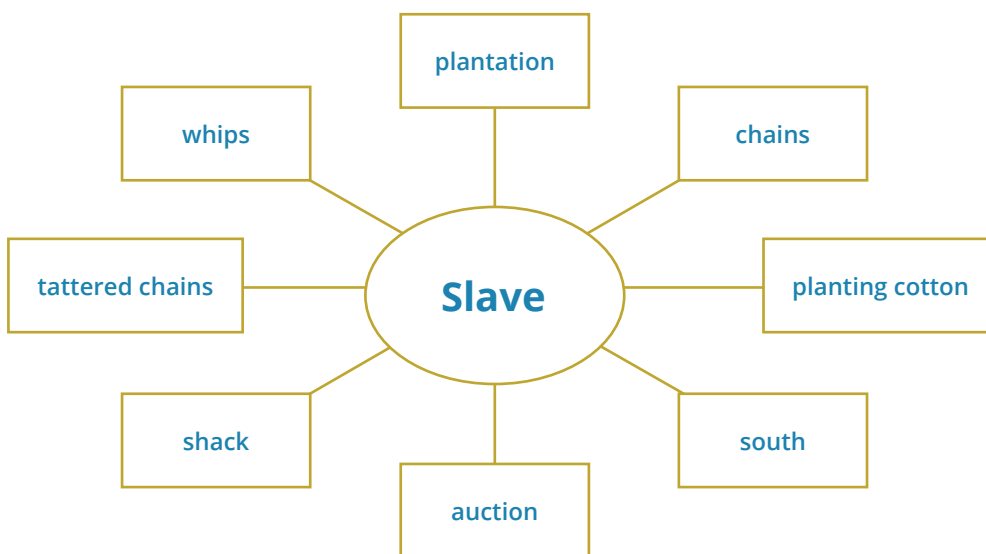
## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## PART I

### What’s in a Word? (15 minutes)

- 1 Write “slave” on the board and ask students what words or phrases come to mind when they hear the term. Allow students to free associate and record their thoughts. Discuss patterns they notice and ask why the use of “slave” might be problematic. Comment that the term may (consciously or unconsciously) objectify and deny the humanity of enslaved individuals. Share that using “enslaved person” helps to emphasize that humanity.



## NOTE

For more information on the evolution of language about slavery, see, for example, “A Proposal to Change the Words We Use When Talking About the Civil War” by Michael Landis in *Smithsonian Magazine*: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/proposal-change-vocabulary-we-use-when-talking-about-civil-war-180956547/#:~:text=I%20suggest%20that%20we%20drop,Confederate%20view%20of%20secession%20wherein.>

## 2

Post the additional slavery-related terms below and have students, in pairs or small groups, brainstorm why each might be problematic and generate possible alternatives. Gather the class and debrief using the information on the chart. Discuss the power of language and how shifting the ways in which we talk about slavery can disrupt damaging beliefs and prejudices. Make an agreement to use the most respectful terminology when discussing slavery, and post a chart with these terms in a prominent place in the classroom.

TERM	PROBLEM	ALTERNATIVE
Slave	Objectifies and dehumanizes the individual	Enslaved person
Slave master/owner/holder	Gives an air of authority and legality; conceals the cruelty	Enslaver
Runaway/fugitive/escapee	Emphasizes lawbreaking over claiming justice	Freedom seeker
Plantation	Calls to mind wealth, abundance, serene countryside	Labor camp

## PART II

### Myths and Knowledge Gaps (45 minutes)

## 3

Engage students in a “myth or fact” exercise on slavery. Select at least three statements from the handout *Slavery in the United States: Stubborn Myths in Brief*. Read each aloud, one at a time, and ask students to discuss whether they think it’s a myth or fact, and why. Choose one of the following methods to conduct this exercise:

- Designate one end of the room as “myth” and the other end as “fact.” Have students stand somewhere along this continuum in response to each statement. As a class, discuss their rationale for each response.
- In small groups of three, have students discuss each statement and try to come to a consensus on whether it is a myth or fact.

- 4 Reveal that all of the statements are myths, and clarify those that are surprising or confusing to students. Note that there are stubborn falsehoods and knowledge gaps about slavery that persist in our society due to the oversimplification of history and our country's difficulty in facing the legacy of white supremacy and racism.
- 5 Tell students they will read about one myth in more depth in order to "fill in" their own knowledge gaps. Have students choose one of the topics below and form small groups based on their choice. Distribute copies of the corresponding handouts to each group. Instruct groups to read the handout collaboratively and engage in a "roundtable discussion" using some of the questions that follow the reading. Students' answer to the first question should be recorded. They can then choose from among the remaining questions as they continue the discussion.
  - *Myth: They Didn't Know Better*
  - *Myth: They Were Powerless to Resist*
  - *Myth: The Civil War was about States' Rights*
- 6 Use the "jigsaw" method to create new groups in which there is a mix of students who have read different handouts. Have students share a summary of their topic and the personal response they constructed (question one).
- 7 Reconvene the class to debrief the activity, using the discussion questions on the next page.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Slavery Made America." *The Atlantic*, June 24, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288>.
- + Desmond, Matthew. "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation." *NY Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>.
- + Heim, Joe. "The missing pieces of America's education." *Washington Post*, August 28, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/28/historians-slavery-myths/?arc404=true>.
- + Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: The New Press, 1995.
- + Southern Poverty Law Center. *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, February 2018. [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt\\_hard\\_history\\_american\\_slavery.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt_hard_history_american_slavery.pdf).
- + Stewart, Nikita. "We are committing educational malpractice: Why slavery is mistaught—and worse—in American schools," *New York Times*, August 19, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/19/magazine/slavery-american-schools.html>.

# Discussion Questions

- 1 What did this lesson reveal about your own knowledge gaps related to slavery?
- 2 How do the issues presented in the handouts help to humanize enslaved people? Why is it important to do so?
- 3 Why do you think myths about slavery are so lasting? How do you think they affect our society?
- 4 How does the language we use to talk about slavery feed into those myths?
- 5 How are myths about slavery connected to racism today?
- 6 What other topics get left out or misrepresented in the school curriculum? What do you think can be done to change this?

# Lesson Extensions

- Have students create their own "myths and facts" survey about slavery and conduct it (nonjudgmentally) with their peers, family and community members. After analyzing the results, have students write an article for the school website or newspaper about the findings and their recommendations for improving education about slavery at their school.
- Challenge students to examine the history textbooks used at their school and evaluate how well or how poorly they address the topic of slavery and enslaved people.
- Assign students to review the Southern Poverty Law Center report *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*: <https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history>. Direct them to focus on the "Executive Summary" or choose one part of the "How Slavery is Taught Today" section. Have them create a brief activity or presentation that responds to one of the problems discussed and present it to their classmates or peers in other classes.





# Slavery in the United States: Stubborn Myths in Brief

## 1 Slavery was mainly a problem in the South.

**MYTH:** Slavery existed in the North as well. For example, New Jersey's enslaved population was more than 12,000 in 1800, and there were hundreds of enslaved people in New Jersey at the end of the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> Many of those who did not own enslaved people profited from business, banking and other economic activities centered on slavery. Slavery was a national problem.

## 2 Many supporters of slavery didn't know better—it was a different time.

**MYTH:** For centuries, many people understood and fought against the immorality of slavery. Many of those who participated in the enslavement of others acknowledged its evils, but did so anyway for convenience and financial gain. Thomas Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, wrote in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence that slavery was a "cruel war against nature itself." That passage was ultimately struck.

## 3 Though most enslaved people suffered, many were treated well and were content.

**MYTH:** The ownership of human beings as personal property is inherently an abuse. It is a fundamental contradiction to be enslaved and treated well. Do you think any enslaved person could have been truly happy about their situation?

## 4 Most enslaved people were powerless to resist slavery.

**MYTH:** Enslaved people rebelled in large and small ways every day—by escaping to freedom, learning to read, leading revolts, writing about their experiences, joining abolition movements, engaging in work slow-downs and other forms of sabotage, educating their children and more.

## 5 Technically, the Civil War was fought over issues including states' rights and taxation.

**MYTH:** Slavery was the core issue—every state that seceded from the Union notes slavery as the main reason in its secession documents.<sup>2</sup>

## 6 While slavery was horrible, Black people have had freedom for most of our country's history.

**MYTH:** Slavery existed in what is today the United States for more than 300 years;<sup>3</sup> emancipation occurred a little more than 150 years ago. Since that time, structural racism has continued to severely limit opportunities for Black Americans.

## 7 In the United States, only Black people were enslaved.

**MYTH:** Native American people were also enslaved in the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>4</sup>

## 8 The Civil War and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment put an end to slavery in the United States.

**MYTH:** Today, hundreds of thousands of people are subjected to forced labor and other forms of "modern slavery" in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Globally, human trafficking and slavery remain grave present-day problems.

1 Hennelly, Robert. "Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey's DNA. *Salon*, JULY 29, 2015. [https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret\\_history\\_of\\_a\\_northern\\_slave\\_state\\_how\\_slavery\\_was\\_written\\_into\\_new\\_jerseys\\_dna](https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna).

2 Pierce, John. "The Reasons for Secession." American Battlefield Trust. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/reasons-secession>.

3 Ponti, Crystal. "America's History of Slavery Began Long Before Jamestown." History.com, August 26, 2019. <https://www.history.com/news/american-slavery-before-jamestown-1619>.

4 Onion, Rebecca. "America's Other Original Sin." *Slate*, January 18, 2016. [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/cover\\_story/2016/01/native\\_american\\_slavery\\_historians\\_uncover\\_a\\_chilling\\_chapter\\_in\\_u\\_s\\_history.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/cover_story/2016/01/native_american_slavery_historians_uncover_a_chilling_chapter_in_u_s_history.html).

5 Helmore, Edward. "Over 400,000 people living in 'modern slavery' in US, report finds. *The Guardian*, July 19, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/19/us-modern-slavery-report-global-slavery-index>.



## Myth: They Didn't Know Better

In 2019, South Bend, Indiana, mayor and presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg was criticized for the following comment, originally made on a children's television show in 2014: "It's an embarrassing thing to admit, but the people who wrote the Constitution did not understand that slavery was a bad thing and did not respect civil rights." Though his intentions may have been positive, Buttigieg was rightly called out for continuing the myth that people during the time of slavery didn't know better. The difficult truth is that people did know better, and many participated in the enslavement of others anyway.

The enslavement of indigenous and Black people in the Americas began almost from the moment Christopher Columbus and other colonizers set foot on the Caribbean islands in the 1490s, and so did protest against its cruelty. One Spanish missionary, Bartolomé de las Casas, gave up his land and the enslaved people he had been granted after about a decade of witnessing the brutality of enslaved labor. In 1514, he begged the Spanish Crown to end the abuses of slavery, later writing that the treatment of Taíno natives forced to mine gold and perform other labor amounted to atrocities "to which no chronicle could ever do justice."<sup>1</sup> Over the next 300 years, thousands of other priests, journalists, politicians and ordinary citizens would speak out against the evils of slavery. By the time the Founding Fathers envisioned a new country and a new constitution,

they were very much aware of and involved in debates about this cruel and inhuman practice.

In his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote a 168-word passage about slavery in which he called it an "assemblage of horrors." Blaming slavery in the American colonies on the British king, he wrote: "He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred



Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams review a draft of the Declaration of Independence.

rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither." The passage was debated and dropped by the Second Continental Congress, attended by John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. The final declaration included the famous phrase, "all

men are created equal," but did not recognize the inequality of slavery. Jefferson himself enslaved over 600 human beings in his lifetime.

The Founding Fathers differed on the subject of slavery. Like Jefferson, James Madison felt the practice was "dishonorable to the National character," yet he enslaved over 100 people on his Virginia plantation and in the White House. Benjamin Franklin and John Jay also enslaved people, but freed them as their anti-slavery positions grew stronger. Franklin founded the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and Jay fought to outlaw the slave trade in New York. George Washington became a supporter of abolition later in his life, but only freed the enslaved people he owned in his will. John Adams, Samuel Adams, Thomas Paine and Alexander Hamilton were always against slavery and didn't own enslaved people (though Samuel Adams and Alexander Hamilton may have held title to enslaved people for a time). Hamilton was involved in efforts to abolish slavery and supported the African Free School, which educated the children of enslaved and free Black people.

Slavery was a hotly contested subject in the U.S. in the 18th and 19th centuries, and at the forefront of public discourse. Some people may have closed their eyes to its cruelty, explained it away or defended it out of greed or convenience; but it would have been impossible for them to not know better because of the times they lived in.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Nabokov, "Indians, Slaves, and Mass Murder: The Hidden History." *The New York Review of Books*, November 24, 2016, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/11/24/indians-slaves-and-mass-murder-the-hidden-history>.



# Roundtable Discussion

## MYTH: THEY DIDN'T KNOW BETTER

- 1 After reading about this myth in more depth, how would you respond (in your own words) to someone who said, "Many supporters of slavery didn't know better—it was a different time?"

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- 2 Do you know about people or groups, in addition to those in the reading, who fought against slavery? If so, who? If not, why do you think this is a knowledge gap?
- 3 Did it surprise you to learn that the first draft of the Declaration of Independence addressed slavery? Why do you think this passage was dropped, even though many of the Founding Fathers acknowledged slavery was wrong?
- 4 Based on the Founding Fathers' behaviors, do you think it would have been possible for average people in those times to be *unaware* of arguments for and against slavery? Explain.
- 5 Are there activities we engage in today that may be looked at as immoral or wrong by people in the future?
- 6 How has this reading made you think about how you have been taught about slavery in the U.S.?

#### SOURCES:

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Dussel, Enrique. "Bartolomé de Las Casas." *Britannica*, June 27, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bartolome-de-Las-Casas>.

Williams, Yohuru. "Why Thomas Jefferson's Anti-Slavery Passage Was Removed from the Declaration of Independence." *History.com*. June 29, 2020. <https://www.history.com/news/declaration-of-independence-deleted-anti-slavery-clause-jefferson>.

#### IMAGE CITATION:

Ferris, Jean Leon Gerome, *Writing the Declaration of Independence*, 1776, oil on canvas, United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Writing\\_the\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Independence\\_1776\\_cph.3g09904.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Writing_the_Declaration_of_Independence_1776_cph.3g09904.jpg).



# Myth: They Were Powerless to Resist

The idea that Black people were powerless to resist their own enslavement is rooted in age-old and ugly stereotypes. In the 1830s, for example, a white actor invented the character Jim Crow, a lazy and dim-witted Black slave. Cartoonish and dehumanizing figures like this spread through American culture, allowing white people to justify slavery by casting Black people as inferior, and as contented servants. How could people like this be capable of standing up for themselves and demanding a different life?

In fact, resistance was a daily part of the lives of millions of enslaved people. As one historian wrote, “Slaves ‘naturally’ resisted their enslavement because slavery was fundamentally unnatural.”<sup>1</sup> Most people know about Harriet Tubman, the heroic Underground Railroad conductor who made as many as 19 trips from South to North and rescued hundreds of enslaved people. Many have also heard about famous rebellions, such as the one organized by Nat Turner in 1831. Turner was a passionate preacher who, after killing his enslavers and securing weapons, enlisted 75 others in an uprising that led to the death of about 55 white people.

Accounts of escape and insurgency are an inspiring part of the history of enslaved people. However, they were comparatively rare, and overshadow the more important story of Black resistance—the smaller, everyday ways in which enslaved people refused to accept their



Jim Crow

situation and imagined a better tomorrow.

Enslaved people participated in acts of defiance every day. They intentionally slowed their work and faked illness to reduce the profits of their enslavers. They broke tools, injured animals and damaged crops on plantations. They also took food, clothing and other supplies denied to them, which they used to care for their own needs and sold or traded with others.

Enslaved people resisted culturally and spiritually as well. They married, formed families and educated their children. They taught each other to read and write, and documented their experiences. They secretly kept African traditions and religious worship alive. They practiced and

mastered important work skills—like sewing and metal work—so they would have a means of survival after being freed. We don’t often think of these behaviors as resistance, but consider the strength of mind and character it took for enslaved people to believe in themselves and their futures when the country they were forced to live in considered them chattel (property).

When we fail to see all of the ways in which enslaved people fought back, we fail to see their humanity, and may even accept the idea that slavery “wasn’t that bad.” This couldn’t be further from the truth. As history professor and civil rights expert Hasan Kwame Jeffries reminds us: “Regardless of form or function, resistance was never-ending. As long as slavery existed, African Americans resisted.”<sup>2</sup>



In Savannah, Georgia, enslaved people resisted by constructing their own church—the First African Baptist Church—and building a secret passage for run-aways beneath the floorboards. Air holes were drilled into the floor and disguised by forming them into an African prayer symbol.

1 Franklin W. Knight, “Slavery,” in Colin A. Palmer, ed., *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (New York: Thompson/Gale, 2006), 2066.

2 Heim, Joe. “The missing pieces of America’s education.” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/28/historians-slavery-myths/?arc404=true>.



# Roundtable Discussion

## MYTH: THEY WERE POWERLESS TO RESIST

1 After reading about this myth in more depth, how would you respond (in your own words) to someone who said, “Most enslaved people were powerless to resist slavery”?

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2 How does a focus on resistance remind us of enslaved people’s humanity?

3 Why is it limiting to focus mostly on escape and rebellion when talking about resistance?

4 What were more common forms of resistance?

5 How did enslaved people demonstrate *cultural* and *spiritual* resistance?

6 How has this reading made you think about how you have been taught about slavery in the U.S.?

SOURCES:

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. “Did African-American Slaves Rebel?” PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/did-african-american-slaves-rebel>.

Jeffries, Hasan Kwame. “Yes, there was rebellion. But smaller acts of resistance defined the daily lives of the enslaved.” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/28/historians-slavery-myths/?arc404=true>.

Jim Crow Museum. “Who was Jim Crow?” <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/who/index.htm>.

Sweet, James H. Slave “Resistance.” National Humanities Center. [http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/slaveresist.htm#\\_ednref1](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/slaveresist.htm#_ednref1).

IMAGE CITATION:

Jim Crow: Popular Graphic Arts, Jim Crow, etching and ink, United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ds.00886>.

Photo Credit, First African Baptist Church: Elissa Zylbershlag ©2016



# Myth: The Civil War was about States' Rights

In a poll by the Pew Research Center<sup>1</sup> about the main causes of the Civil War, 48 percent of Americans said it was mostly about states' rights and just 38 percent said it was fought over slavery. Among people younger than 30, 60 percent believed states' rights was the chief cause. Even teachers regularly debate this issue. So, what are "states' rights" and what do they have to do with the Civil War?

In the early days of the United States, leaders argued over whether there should be a strong central government or one that exercised less control over the states. The 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1791, created a balance. It simply said the federal government has only those powers granted to it in the Constitution, and all other decisions belong to the states. Examples of federal powers include declaring war and coining money. States' rights include managing elections, setting traffic laws and building roads and schools. Before the Civil War, states also had the right to decide if slavery would be legal or not.

After the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, Southern states feared the system of slavery—which brought them tremendous wealth and power—would be undone. This was the only significant "state right" that was being debated at the time. They accused free states (in the north and west) of interfering with their rights on a number of fronts: by banning enslavers from bringing enslaved people into their states for temporary stays; by refusing to cooperate in the capture and

return of runaways; by allowing anti-slavery speeches and events; and by permitting Black men to vote in some places. Southern states were enraged by what they perceived as a threat to their way of life, and accused Northern and Western states of defying the Constitution. They called upon national law to limit the actions of free states, which was essentially at odds with a states' rights position.

When the 11 states seceded from the Union in 1860, they published statements with their reasons. The following quotes from the "Declaration of Causes of Seceding States" shows that slavery was a main concern:

**Mississippi:** "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world."

**Louisiana:** "The people of the slave holding States are bound together by the same necessity and determination to preserve African slavery."

**Texas:** "The servitude of the African race, as existing in these States, is mutually beneficial to both bond and free, and is abundantly authorized and justified by the experience of mankind."

Several states specifically mentioned the election of Abraham Lincoln and his support for abolition as a main reason for secession. Alabama claimed this was "nothing less than an open declaration of war." Others claimed that slave labor was essential to their economies. Mississippi went so far as to say that agricultural work in the hot South depended on slavery because "none



President Lincoln Entering Richmond, VA, with Emancipated Slaves (April 1865)

but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun." When the new Confederate States wrote their constitution, it made slavery a national rather than a local concern: "No bill...or law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed."

Since the Civil War, some have attempted to reframe the main cause of the conflict by focusing on states' rights or other issues, such as taxes and tariffs. This may be because it's painful to accept the truth that millions fought to uphold a cruel and inhuman system. It may be because people want to believe the best about their state or region. Or it may be due to prejudice. The historical evidence makes it clear, however, that the Civil War was fought mainly over the issue of slavery, and that the Confederate cause was the continuation of white supremacy.

<sup>1</sup> Heimlich, Russell. "What Caused the Civil War?" Pew Research Center. May 18, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2011/05/18/what-caused-the-civil-war>.



# Roundtable Discussion

## MYTH: THE CIVIL WAR WAS ABOUT STATES' RIGHTS

- 1 After reading about this myth in more depth, how would you respond (in your own words) to someone who said, "Technically, the Civil War was fought over states' rights"?

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- 2 How did some of the actions of Southern states actually conflict with a states' rights approach?

- 3 What is your reaction to the language in the "Declaration of Causes of Seceding States"? Were you surprised that Southern states were so direct in talking about slavery? Explain.

- 4 Why do you think many Americans—even today—are unwilling to accept that slavery was the main cause of the Civil War?

- 5 How has this reading made you think about how you have been taught about slavery in the U.S.?

### SOURCES:

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "What This Cruel War Was Over." *The Atlantic*. June 22, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/what-this-cruel-war-was-over/396482>.

Heimlich, Russell. "What Caused the Civil War?" Pew Research Center. May 18, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2011/05/18/what-caused-the-civil-war>.

Flanagin, Jake. "For the last time, the American Civil War was not about states' rights." Quartz. April 8, 2015. <https://qz.com/378533/for-the-last-time-the-american-civil-war-was-not-about-states-rights>.

Loewen, James. "Getting the Civil War Right." *Teaching Tolerance*, Issue 40. Fall 2011. <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2011/getting-the-civil-war-right>.

Pierce, John. "The Reasons for Secession." American Battlefields Trust. [https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/reasons-secession?clid=Cj0KCQjw7N-j5BRCZARIsABwxDKKIGMVLmGHatQFUtCxD3Mh61Ri7G-2FPZXmP0O3bxMWvb2MhAkWVCwaAvDYEALw\\_wcB](https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/reasons-secession?clid=Cj0KCQjw7N-j5BRCZARIsABwxDKKIGMVLmGHatQFUtCxD3Mh61Ri7G-2FPZXmP0O3bxMWvb2MhAkWVCwaAvDYEALw_wcB)

### IMAGE CITATION:

Nast, Thomas, *President Lincoln Entering Richmond (April 1865)*, blue pencil, February 24, 1866, (Harper's Weekly), <https://archive.today/GsGO3/63023965a1e-c77f37f45b01dbded6aa3d5e19246.jpg>.

# What was the significance of the Amistad rebellion for enslaved people and for all Americans?

In February 1839, Portuguese slave hunters captured hundreds of African people in Mendeland, in what is today Sierra Leone, and transported them across the Atlantic for sale at a Cuban slave market. Many nations had outlawed the international slave trade by this time, but it was a profitable industry that persisted illegally. In Havana, Spanish plantation owners Pedro Montes and Jose Ruiz purchased 53 of the captives—including four children—and forced them aboard the schooner *La Amistad*.

As the ship sailed toward the site of the enslavers' plantations in Puerto Principe, Cuba, the Africans feared for their lives. Led by Sengbe Pieh (also known as Joseph Cinqué), they organized a revolt. They broke free from their chains, killing the captain and ship's cook and demanding that the surviving crew members return them to Africa. Though initially sailing east, the Spanish crew attempted to deceive the Africans by reversing course. After 63 days, the ship ended up near the coast of Long Island, New York, where U.S. naval officers apprehended and escorted it to Connecticut. Charged with murder and piracy, the African captives were imprisoned in New Haven. The case—and the fate of the African prisoners—garnered immediate and worldwide interest.

Though the original charges were soon dropped, claims were filed by Montes and Ruiz, asserting the captives were their lawful property. President Martin Van Buren, under pressure from Spain, wished to extradite the Africans to Cuba. In response, abolitionist groups organized and mounted a vigorous defense on behalf of the Africans, contending that they were native-born, free Africans who had been illegally abducted and transported under the U.S. Act Prohibiting Importation

of Slaves of 1807. Former president John Quincy Adams would ultimately represent the Amistad captives before the U.S. Supreme Court.

During the 18 months that the case made its way through U.S. courts, the African people worked with a translator and studied English so they could tell their story in their own words. They became powerful advocates on their own behalf, testifying in court and writing letters demanding their freedom. In one letter to his lawyer, John Quincy Adams, 12-year-old Kale—the lone boy aboard the Amistad—wrote: “Dear friend Mr. Adams, you have children, you have friends, you love them, you feel very sorry if Mendi people come and take all to Africa... [Americans] say we make you free. If they make us free they tell truth, if they not make us free they tell lie. If America...no give us free we sorry...for America people great deal because God punish liars...Dear friend, we want you to know how we feel.”

On March 9, 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court found, in a 7-1 decision, that the Africans had been illegally captured, could not be considered slaves and should be returned to their homeland. The U.S., however, did not provide the funds for repatriation. The Africans and their abolitionist supporters spent the next eight months touring the U.S. to raise the necessary resources, and in November 1841, the 35 surviving Amistad captives set sail for Africa.

While the Amistad decision did not hold that slavery in its entirety was wrong, it spotlighted the humanity of African people and the inherent inhumanity of the slave trade, and of treating human beings as chattel. In this way, the 53 African captives played a critically important role in the battle against slavery in the U.S.



# LA AMISTAD: A CHILD'S JOURNEY



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What do you think the experience was like for children who came to the U.S. on the Amistad? How do you think the experience changed them?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn about the rebellion by the kidnapped Mende aboard the slave ship *La Amistad*.
- Analyze a fictionalized child's perspective on the Amistad by creating a visual representation of it.
- Describe the lives the children of the Amistad were forced to leave behind and identify connections between these children's lives and their own.
- Interpret Hale Woodruff's murals depicting the Amistad and discuss the social and emotional effects of the rebellion and legal victory.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60–90 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project images
- *Journey on the Amistad—A Child's Perspective* handout (one per student)
- Drawing implements (markers, crayons, colored pencils)
- *Amistad Knowledge Cards* handout (one set per small group)
- *Gallery Cards* handout (one per student)



## VOCABULARY

abolitionist	captive	enslaver	mutiny
bondage	enslaved	La Amistad	rebellion

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## NOTE

In 1938, the artist Hale Woodruff was commissioned to paint a series of murals for the new Slavery Library at Talladega College. The school, formed by a group of former enslaved people and new freedmen, was Alabama’s first college dedicated to the educational needs of Black people. *Rising Up: Hale Woodruff’s Murals at Talladega College* portrayed six noteworthy events in the history of Black people, from slavery to freedom. Three of the pieces focus on the Amistad rebellion.

- 1 Project the image of the ship, La Amistad at <https://www.history.com/topics/abolitionist-movement/amistad-case>. Ask students if they have ever heard of the ship and invite them to share their prior knowledge. Briefly provide information from the site above (or a source of your choosing) about the Amistad rebellion and subsequent court case.
- 2 Project the painting *The Mutiny on the Amistad*, which is part of the series *Rising Up: Hale Woodruff’s Murals at Talladega College*: <https://high.org/exhibition/rising-up>. Invite students to observe it closely. Have students engage in a turn-and-talk with a partner in which they discuss what most stands out to them in the painting and why. As a class, continue to examine the painting using some of the questions below.
  - What feelings do you think the African people aboard the Amistad experienced after being forced from their homes and held captive on this ship? What do you think it took for them to rebel?
  - What do you notice about the style of the painting, such as the colors and shapes the artist uses? What feelings does the style of the mural cause you to experience?
  - Notice that Cinqué (the rebellion’s leader) is battling the cook (in the yellow bandana) and another African is fighting the captain (in the green hat), but the faces of the white men are not shown. Why do you think the artist made this choice? [*The reason was to not humanize the enslavers.*]


- 3** Share with students that there were four children aboard the *Amistad*, three girls and a boy, and ask them to consider what it might have felt like for someone their age to be in such a frightening situation. Tell students that they will create a drawing—like Hale Woodruff—about the *Amistad*, but from a child’s point of view. Distribute the handout *Journey on the Amistad—A Child’s Perspective*, and explain that the story is a fictional account of what the experience of *La Amistad* might have been like for a child. Read aloud or have students independently read the story. After, direct students to sketch a portrait of the narrator or the scene as they imagine it. When students are done with their drawings, have them share and discuss in pairs or small groups. (Keep students in their small groups for the next step.)
- 4** Point out Sierra Leone on a map and ask students to consider what type of life the children on the *Amistad* were forced to leave behind in their home country. Give each small group a set of *Amistad Knowledge Gallery Cards*. Instruct group members to take turns drawing a card, reading it together, and discussing the questions at the bottom. Encourage students to make connections between these children’s lives and their own, and to reflect on the idea that before they were taken into captivity, the children of the *Amistad* had lives not so different from their own.
- 5** Project (but omit the titles of) the two remaining *Amistad* murals at <https://high.org/exhibition/rising-up>: *The Trial of the Amistad Captives* and *The Repatriation of the Freed Captives*. Distribute copies of the *Gallery Cards* handout to students and review the instructions with them. Have students do a “gallery walk” and close observation of one or both paintings. When they are done, have students share their titles and captions in small groups or as a class. Share the actual titles and answer any questions students may have. Make sure they understand the following key points:
- Mural #2: *The Trial* depicts the court case in which the African people argued they had been illegally captured and had the right to fight for their freedom. The Court agreed and set them free.

#### NOTE

The captives aboard the *Amistad* were taken from Mendeland (also spelled Mendiland), in modern-day southwest Sierra Leone. The Mende people, whose language is also called Mende, are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone.

#### NOTE

For additional context and analysis of the murals, see the article “*Amistad and after: Hale Woodruff’s Talladega murals*” in *The Magazine ANTIQUES*: <https://www.themagazineantiques.com/article/amistad-and-after>.

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- Though the Court freed the African people, the U.S. government did not provide funds for their passage back to Africa. This money was raised by abolitionist groups, and the 35 surviving Africans returned home two years after they had been captured, as depicted in mural #3: *The Repatriation*. The other 18 people died at sea or in prison awaiting trial.
  - The Amistad case is one of the most important court cases in U.S. history. It ruled that enslaved people were not property and could not be owned. The case showed that many people—including powerful individuals—were against slavery. It strengthened the abolitionist movement, which would lead to the end of slavery 25 years later.

# Discussion Questions

1

How do you think it felt for millions of enslaved Americans to learn of the case freeing the Amistad captives, even while they remained in bondage? Do you think they felt more hopeful or discouraged? Why?

2

How does it make you feel to read what could have been a child's version of history? Why are these kinds of sources difficult to find?

3

What connections did you discover between your life and the West African children aboard the Amistad? What kinds of things do children everywhere have in common?

4

What do you think was the first thing the children of the Amistad did when they returned home?

5

How do you think the children—and their families and communities—were different as a result of the Amistad events?

6

Efforts to end chattel slavery in the U.S. began in the late 1700s, but slavery did not become illegal until the 1860s. What does this tell you about the way change happens? What other movements for change are you aware of that took a long time to reach their goals?

# Lesson Extensions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Edinger, Monica. *Africa is My Home: A Child of the Amistad*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2013.
  - + Janovy, C.J. "With Powerful Murals, Hale Woodruff Paved The Way For African-American Artists." *NPR*, December 19, 2015. <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/19/459251265/with-powerful-murals-hale-woodruff-paved-the-way-for-african-american-artists>.
  - + PBS Newshour Extra. "Lesson plan: Six murals tell the story of La Amistad and the African slave trade." January 29, 2015. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/rising-up-the-talladega-murals-lesson-plan-and-digital-student-guide>.
  - + State Bar of Georgia. "The Amistad Case: 'Give us Free'." June 20, 2018. YouTube video, 7:22. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_zTN6tsDpw&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_zTN6tsDpw&t=18s).
  - + Studies Weekly. "The Amistad." March 4, 2016. YouTube video, 1:21. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE1xFtoFvco>.
- Have students create a map tracing the route of the Mende captives aboard *La Amistad*, from their home in Sierra Leone to Cuba and north to New York and Connecticut. Have them include the journey back to Africa for the 35 people who survived.
  - *The United States v. The Amistad* was an important court case that helped to pave the way for the abolition of slavery. Assign students to research another U.S. Supreme Court decision related to slavery. *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) is the most famous. Lesser-known cases include *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* (1842), *Strader v. Graham* (1851), and *Ableman v. Booth* (1859). Have students create a poster illustrating the significance of the case.
  - Hale Woodruff's murals helped educate the public about the evils of slavery. Have students explore other works of art that were used to resist slavery, such as the painting "Am Not I A Man And A Brother," (c. 1800), based on English potter Josiah Wedgwood's design: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-43233175>. This image depicts an enslaved African man, in chains, kneeling at a sugar plantation in the Caribbean. It became the dominant image of the abolition movement in Britain.

### Amistad Knowledge Cards Photo Credits

SLAVE SHIP: Sullivan, George L. *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa*. 1873. The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper, London.

RICE AND PLANTAINS: Nwachukwu, Nancy. *Jollof rice with fried fish and fried plantain*. March 17, 2013. Wikimedia Commons. Accessed June 17, 2020. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:jollof\\_rice\\_with\\_fried\\_fish\\_and\\_fried\\_plantain.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:jollof_rice_with_fried_fish_and_fried_plantain.jpg).

MANKALA: Burnett, Colin. *Wooden Mancala board*. June 30, 2005. Wikimedia Commons. Accessed June 17, 2020. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Wooden\\_Mancala\\_board.jpg&oldid=195747615](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Wooden_Mancala_board.jpg&oldid=195747615).

CHILDREN PLAYING: Gitau, Git Stephen. *Shallow Focus Photography Of Two Kids Playing On Swing*. Digital image. Photo by Git Stephen Gitau from Pexels.

CHILD WITH MOTHER: Dazzle Jam. *Girl With Braided Hair Standing While Carrying Boy Wearing Beige Long Sleeved Top*. June 21, 2017. Digital image. Pexels.



# Journey on the Amistad— A Child's Perspective

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

I am so cold, and hungry, and tired, but I cannot sleep. I need to sleep. Maybe I'm dreaming. Maybe I am home in bed with my baby sister and brother. We are huddled together, full bellies, with plans to play tag, and hunt and fish. Maybe I am dreaming. But I can't close my eyes. Then I will see the white face man who hit me and took me. I can't close my eyes. I hate his face. I don't ever want to see it again. If I sleep, I will see it again. Maybe I should try. Maybe this is a dream.

Or maybe my daddy will come for me. He is so big and strong. He will find me, and take me home. And my mom will hold me, and fill my belly and tell me stories. They will find me, and protect me. I will never have to see another white faced man again.

It is so cold here. Why is it so cold? I haven't seen the sun in so long. Is there no sun where we are going? Where are we going? Why did the white faced men take us?

I hope my baby brother and sister are safe. They were still sleeping when I last saw them. I should have stayed. I shouldn't have snuck away to play with my friend Imani before sunrise. I should have stayed. Then, I would still be with them. I miss them. And I miss Imani. I hope she got away. She was running so fast when we saw the white faced men. She was always faster than me. I hope she got away. I hope she is warm and her belly is full. I hope I will see their faces again.

Maybe I'm just dreaming. My eyes are so heavy. I can't stop them from closing anymore. Maybe when I wake up I will be home.

*Below, sketch a portrait of the storyteller or the scene that is taking place as you imagine it.*



# Amistad Knowledge Cards



## THE CHILD ON THE SHIP

- Slave ships were cold and dark.
- Some children were hungry and seasick.
- The children were separated from the adults and they felt alone and scared.

**Question for discussion:** Discuss a time when you felt alone and scared.



## THE CHILD IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY

- In West Africa, some children ate rice and plantains.
- Some children slept in village huts with their whole family, including grandparents.
- West Africa is very hot and the children went to the beach and swam in the ocean.

**Questions for discussion:** What is a favorite food in your home? What activities does your family enjoy?



## THE CHILD PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

- Some children in West Africa play Mancala.
- Children played on the beach around the fishing boats.
- Children used their imaginations and made up a lot of games.

**Question for discussion:** What are some of your favorite games and why do you like them?



## THE CHILD WITH THEIR MOM

- In West Africa, children are considered the hope and future of a community.
- Children are loved by their mom and dad. Each day after school they are hugged and kissed.
- One day, the children will be the leaders and elders of their community.

**Question for discussion:** What do you do with your mom or dad that is special?





# Gallery Cards

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

As you view the Hale Woodruff murals, think about the following questions and write notes about what you observe. Then give each mural a title and caption (short description) that you think captures the main idea.

- 1 What do you think is taking place in the scene?
- 2 Who do you think are important figures in this scene? What do you think they are thinking or feeling?
- 3 What objects did the artist include to help us understand this moment in history?
- 4 How does the painting make you feel? How does the artist create these feelings?

## MURAL #2

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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## MURAL #3

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

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Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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~ Use the back of this page to write additional notes if you need more space. ~

# LA AMISTAD: GLOBAL INCIDENT. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What was the significance of the Amistad rebellion for enslaved people, for free African Americans and for all Americans?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore the key events and significance of the 1839 Amistad rebellion.
- Analyze primary source documents to understand perspectives on the Amistad case and slavery in the mid-1800s.
- Interpret a portrait of the rebellion’s leader to learn about prevailing stereotypes of people of African descent, and how abolitionists countered them.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video and project images
- *Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Amistad* handout (one per student)
- *Primary Sources: La Amistad* handout (one per student)
- Station sources (one copy of the following for each station, enlarged):
  - Entry in the American Anti-Slavery Almanac*
  - Editorial from The Democrat*
  - Letter from Cinqué to Lewis Tappan*
- *Cinqué Portrait by Nathaniel Jocelyn* handout (one to project)
- Sticky notes



## VOCABULARY

abolitionist

enslaved

transatlantic slave trade

Amistad

enslaver

stereotype

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

- 1 Project the image of the ship *La Amistad*, at <https://www.history.com/topics/abolitionist-movement/amistad-case>. Ask students if they have heard of this case and allow them to share their prior knowledge. Provide a brief overview of the Amistad rebellion and court case using information from the History.com article or by showing one of the following videos:

- “The Amistad” (1:21): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE1xFtoFvco>.
- “The Amistad Case: ‘Give us Free’” (7:22): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_zTN6tsDpw&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_zTN6tsDpw&t=18s).

- 2 Distribute a copy of the handout *Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Amistad* to each student and project the definition below. Individually or in pairs, have students trace the route of the African captives on the map and write a definition of the transatlantic slave trade in their own words. Allow them to add details or illustrations reflecting what they have learned about the journey of the captives so far. Provide access to atlases as needed.

*[The] transatlantic slave trade [was a] segment of the global slave trade that transported between 10 million and 12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th century. It was the second of three stages of the so-called triangular trade, in which arms, textiles, and wine were shipped from Europe to Africa, slaves from Africa to the Americas, and sugar and coffee from the Americas to Europe. (Source: Transatlantic Slave Trade by Thomas Lewis, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade>)*

## NOTE

For each source, a brief excerpt is featured. Students should focus only on this excerpt, rather than trying to decipher the entire selection. Students who are able to go further can access the full text on a laptop or tablet using the URLs at the bottom of each source.

3

Tell students they will analyze and compare several primary sources about the Amistad incident, written between 1839 and 1841, in order to better understand the perspectives of people during that era. Distribute the *Primary Sources: La Amistad* handout to each student and review the directions with them.

4

Set up stations for each source below by placing an enlarged version of the handouts in separate work areas. Depending on the class size, you may need two stations for each source. Divide students into small groups and assign them to rotate stations until they have read and recorded their observations for all three sources. Circulate while students are working, and support them with any challenging language and concepts.

### SOURCES

- *Entry in the American Anti-Slavery Almanac*
- *Editorial from The Democrat*
- *Letter from Cinqué to Lewis Tappan*

5

Debrief on the stations exercise using some of the following questions:

- What language or ideas did the anti-abolitionist writer use to influence his readers?
- What stereotypes or bias did you notice in the *Anti-Slavery Almanac*, even though its writers were supportive of the captives?
- What did you observe about Cinqué's tone? Did his manner surprise you? Explain.
- Overall, what did you take away about attitudes toward Black people and slavery in the mid-1800s?
- Why is it important to read primary sources and to not rely only on secondary sources?

6

Project the handout *Cinqué Portrait by Nathaniel Jocelyn*. Share that the portrait was commissioned by Robert Purvis, a wealthy Black abolitionist from Philadelphia, to fight against the stereotype of Africans as savages who were unworthy of freedom. Explain that stereotypes against people of African descent were common in newspapers,

theater, art and literature of the day, and that abolitionists understood they had to change perceptions in order to end slavery.

- 7** Direct students to observe the portrait closely and identify symbols the artist used to shift people’s ideas about people of African descent. In pairs or small groups, have them write each symbol they notice on a separate sticky note. Then invite groups, one at a time, to post one of their notes onto the portrait and explain their thinking. Continue this process until a variety of ideas have been explored. Use the following to guide the discussion as needed:<sup>1</sup>
- Cinqué’s faraway gaze makes him look thoughtful, visionary and noble.
  - His broad shoulders and strong chest, bicep and collarbones convey strength and power.
  - The staff in his hands symbolizes masculinity and power.
  - The toga he is wearing is associated with ancient Greece or Rome, and symbolizes nobility, heroism, and the political values of western nations.
  - The warm light that shines on his forehead and chest make it seem as though the heavens are illuminating him, and that he is virtuous and intelligent.
  - The background represents an African landscape, but the palm trees suggest a hint of the tropic or exotic, maybe even the American South.

- 8** Conclude the lesson by discussing the significance of the Amistad case. Emphasize that it is one of the most important court cases in U.S. history because it established that enslaved people were not property to be owned and helped to humanize them, thereby strengthening the abolitionist movement.

### NOTE

The Picturing United States History website includes an interactive version of the Cinqué portrait. You can click on sections of the portrait to reveal information about what each represents. See <https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/white-into-black-seeing-race-slavery-and-anti-slavery-in-antebellum-america/3/>.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Powell, Richard J. "How Cinque was Painted." *Washington Post*, December 28, 1997. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1997/12/28/how-cinque-was-painted/64bcb5bd-bae9-4db4-9be8-52352c21a829/>; Burns, Sarah L. and Brown, Joshua. "White into Black: Seeing Race, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum America." Picturing United States History. <https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/white-into-black-seeing-race-slavery-and-anti-slavery-in-antebellum-america/3/>.

# Discussion Questions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Burns, Sarah L. and Brown, Joshua. "White into Black: Seeing Race, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum America." Picturing United States History. <https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/white-into-black-seeing-race-slavery-and-anti-slavery-in-antebellum-america/3>.
- + National Park Service. "The Amistad Story." <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/travelamistad/index.htm>.
- + NPR/WNYC. "With Powerful Murals, Hale Woodruff Paved The Way For African-American Artists." <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/19/459251265/with-powerful-murals-hale-woodruff-paved-the-way-for-african-american-artists>.
- + Powell, Richard J. "How Cinque was Painted." *Washington Post*, December 28, 1997. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1997/12/28/how-cinque-was-painted/64bcb5bd-bae9-4db4-9be8-52352c21a829>.
- + Rediker, Marcus. "Audio Lectures—The Amistad Rebellion." Mystic Seaport Museum. [https://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad\\_rebellion](https://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad_rebellion).
- + Slave Voyages. "Explore the Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World." <https://www.slavevoyages.org>.

1

What did you learn from the primary documents that was new or surprising? What did they reveal about the slave trade or attitudes toward people of African descent?

2

What stereotypes about Black people were common in the mid-1800s? How did these beliefs keep slavery going?

3

How did people of African descent resist stereotypes and false ideas about their humanity?

4

Why was the Amistad rebellion and case important, not just for enslaved people, but for all Americans?



# Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Amistad

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Trace the route of the African captives on the map and add details or illustrations showing what you know about their journey. Write a definition of the transatlantic slave trade in your own words.



SOURCE: <http://isejarah.fib.unair.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/THE-ATLANTIC-SLAVE-TRADE.pdf>



# Primary Sources: La Amistad

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Read each primary source and add notes to the chart. Then answer the questions below.

Source	Author	Important Details	Point of View, Biases

**1** What did you learn from these primary sources that you might not learn from modern-day secondary sources, like a textbook?

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**2** What did you learn from reading these different perspectives about attitudes toward Black people and slavery in the mid-1800s?

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# Entry in the American Anti-Slavery Almanac 1841

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Nine of the Africans have died. They have been in jail about a year. They have been instructed daily by benevolent persons. They have made some progress in reading and speaking the English language; and their conduct has been very exemplary. James Covey, a native Mendi, providentially brought to this country, acts as interpreter. They are cheerful, inoffensive, grateful, obedient, and are fast throwing off their pagan habits—but long for liberty and their homes.

President Van Buren, at the request of the Spanish minister, sent a U. S. ship to New-Haven last winter, to convey the Africans to Cuba, to be given up to the Spaniards, in case Judge Judson had not decided as he did.

Ye who love liberty, pray for Cinquez and his companions, and send your money to the committee appointed to protect them, that they may employ able counsel to defend them. S. S. Jocelyn, Joshua Leavitt, and Lewis Tappan, are the committee, and the donations can be sent to Lewis Tappan, Treasurer, No. 122 Pearl street, New-York.

## DESCRIPTION OF CINQUEZ, GRAB-EAU, AND JAMES COVEY THE INTERPRETER.



SING-GEE, [Cingue,] (generally spelt Cinquez) was born in Ma-ni, in Dzho-poa, *i. e.*, in the open land, in the Mendi country. His mother is dead, and he lived with his father. He has a wife and three children, one son and two daughters. His king, Ka-lum-bo, lived at Kaw-men-di, a large town in the Men-di country. He is a planter of rice, and never owned or sold slaves. He was seized by four men, when traveling in the road, his right hand tied to his neck. Ma-ya-gi-la-lo sold him to Ba-ma-dzha, son of Shaka, king of Gen-du-ma, in the Vai country. Ba-ma-dzha carried him to Lomboko and sold him to a Spaniard. At Lomboko he was transferred to a slave-ship, and taken to Havana.

After the terrible "middle passage" [read between decks, when the space is less than three feet, they arrived at Havana. Here they were put into one of the large cells, or prison-rooms, called *hucenas*, and confined to each. In a few days Joseph Bates and Peter Matten bought them. Bates bought Cinquez and Matten bought the children, whose father, Sing-gie, they put them on board the schooner *Amistad*, a coaster, for Puerto Principe, Cuba, a few hundred miles from Havana. When they were two or three days out, they were beaten severely, threatened with death, &c. A quarrel took place. The cook and cabin were killed, and two sailors fed in a boat. Cinquez, the master spirit of the whole, assumed the command. He established a mild government over his comrades and compelled King and Matten to leave the schooner for the thing was their own native Africa. They did so by sea, but in the night they descended the Africans, and ran upwind the United States.

In the way they sailed on the American coast, and came to anchor off Cuddles Point, Long Island. Here some of them landed, made purchases, (paying for all they took), and shipped water, intending to proceed on their passage, but they were taken possession of by Lieutenant Galloway, of the U. S. Brig, *Washington*, and carried into New London, Conn. Judge Judson heard them over in the Circuit Court for trial on the charge of murder, &c.; but Judge Thompson decided that our courts have no cognizance of offences committed on board foreign vessels on the high seas. As, however, the vessel, cargo, and Africans had been seized by Galloway and others for salvage, it was determined that a trial must take place in the District Court. It was held in January, 1840. Judge Judson decided that the prisoners were native Africans, had never been slaves, legally he dismissed the *hucenas* with costs, and showed that the Africans should be delivered to the president of the United States, to be sent back to Africa. But our government, on the demand of the Spanish minister, appealed to the Circuit Court. The court was held in April, 1840. Judge Thompson sustained the appeal, and in view partly of the other would appeal to a higher tribunal, whichever way he might decide, the case went up to the Supreme Court of the United States as a matter of form; there it will be decided January, 1841. Thus these wretched men are to be kept in an American jail eighteen months, and at last, perhaps, delivered by the tender mercies of the Spaniards!

One of the Africans here died. They have been in jail about a year. They have been instructed daily by benevolent persons. They have made some progress in reading and speaking the English language; and their conduct has been very exemplary. James Covey, a native Mendi, providentially brought to this country, acts as interpreter. They are cheerful, inoffensive, grateful, obedient, and are fast throwing off their pagan habits—but long for liberty and their homes.

President Van Buren, at the request of the Spanish minister, sent a U. S. ship to New-Haven last winter, to convey the Africans to Cuba, to be given up to the Spaniards, in case Judge Judson had not decided as he did. Ye who love liberty, pray for Cinquez and his companions, and send your money to the committee appointed to protect them, that they may employ able



Source: American anti-slavery almanac, for 1841 New York: Published by S.W. Benedict, 1841 (i.e. 1840). <https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/Islandora%3A2771>



# Editorial from *The Democrat* (Huntsville, Alabama)

November 23, 1839

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

THE CASE OF RUIZ AND MONTEZ—ATROCIOUS DEVELOPMENT AT NEW HAVEN.—The extraordinary arrest and imprisonment of Messrs. Ruiz and Montez, at the suit of the Amistad savages, instigated by the abolitionists, will come up to-day before Judge Ingles, for further review and examination. The same matter will also be brought before Judge Oakley, to show cause why a discharge from jail should not be ordered. It is expected, therefore, that some strange and curious developments will be made relative to the conduct and intrigues of the abolitionists—the malignant interference of Lewis Tappan, and the uses to which these savages have been put by the fanatics.

This matter, in connexion with the abolition intrigues, is beginning to assume a most revolting and audacious character—a character that makes the blood boil and the heart burn. On the arrival of these savages in this country, with their hands crimsoned with the blood of several white men, they were seized upon by a band of fanatics, who, under the name of humanity and religion, have been levying contributions on the public while they were proposing to teach these savages the elements of religion and civilization. All sorts of intrigues have been adopted to deceive the public, and to annoy and harass the foreigners, who hardly escaped with their lives from the Amistad. Under the pupilage of the abolitionists, the savages have been made the instruments of crime and wickedness in order to gratify malignity and hate. There can be no doubt that their instigators, whoever they are, are liable to an indictment for subornation of perjury—and we trust that the friends of justice and humanity at New Haven will take speedy steps to inflict the just punishment provided by law against such acts.

We do not speak at random. In this day's paper, is a very important letter from our correspondent at New Haven, whose accurate information, and mode of judging are of the simplest kind. From his statements every calm mind must be satisfied that the savages have sworn to what they know nothing of and cannot substantiate. They are ignorant of the nature of an oath, and cannot be held responsible for what they are made to swear, but their rulers and abettors are the guilty parties on whom the vengeance of the laws ought to fall.

But this is not all the horrors of the abolition intrigues. It seems that Jiqua and his associates have been furnished secretly with knives. Who did this? Who would do this? Is it not likely that those weapons were conveyed to the savages by the same fanatics who would suborn them to perjury, in order to incarcerate Messrs. Ruiz and Montez? Is not this the most probable supposition? And if so, for what intent were they furnished with the weapons of murder? Was it to make the prison of New Haven as red with the blood of the white man as the decks of the Amistad?

Humanity must shudder at such doings; religion hang her head; and justice cry aloud for vengeance! If this is the first fruits of the lessons of religion and civilization which have been taught these savages by the abolitionists, it is time for our courts of justice to pause—and to inquire whether they ought to lend themselves to the attempts of such fiends any longer. The first movements of the fanatics with these negroes only excited ridicule and contempt. Turning somersets at sixpence a head, eating three dinners per day, or kissing little white girls as they were handed up to them by their abolition mothers, might be tolerated as the madness of the hour that time might cure. But when we see insolence, perjury, false imprisonment, and preparations making among the savages for blood and massacre, it is full time to ask whether our courts of justice are to tolerate such things any longer. Let us know.—*N. Y. Herald, Oct. 23.*



This matter, in connexion with the abolition intrigues, is beginning to assume a most revolting and audacious character—a character that makes the blood boil and the heart burn. On the arrival of these savages in this country, with their hands crimsoned with the blood of several white men, they were seized upon by a band of fanatics, who, under the name of humanity and religion, have been levying contributions on the public while they were proposing to teach these savages the elements of religion and civilization. All sorts of intrigues have been adopted to deceive the public, and to annoy and harass the foreigners, who hardly escaped with their lives from the Amistad. Under the pupilage of the abolitionists, the savages have been made the instruments of crime and wickedness in order to gratify malignity and hate.

SOURCE: Newspapers.com. "Anti-abolitionist editorial against the arrest of Montes and Ruiz, two Spaniards on the Amistad." *The Democrat* (Huntsville, AL), November 23, 1839. <https://www.newspapers.com/topics/civil-war/amistad-case>.



# Letter from Cinqué to Lewis Tappan

February 29, 1841

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTE

- Cinqué was the Mendi man who led the revolt aboard the Amistad.
- Lewis Tappan was a New York City businessman and abolitionist, who helped organize the defense of the Amistad captives.
- John Quincy Adams ("Mr. Adams") was the sixth president of the United States and defended the Amistad captives before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dear Sir

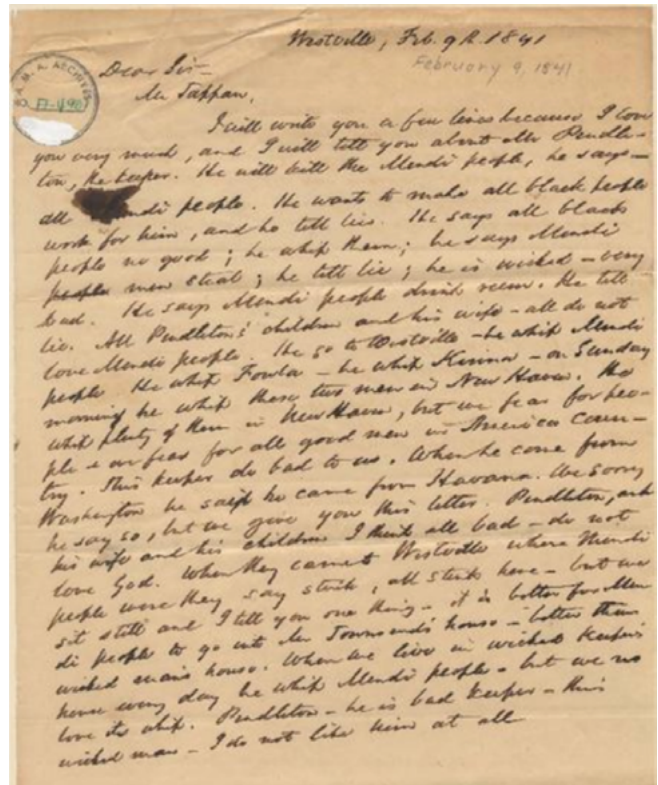
Mr. Tappan,

I will write you a few lines because I love you very much and I will tell you about Mr. Pendleton keeper [of the jail in New Haven, Connecticut.] He will kill the Mendi people, he says all Mendi people. He want make all black people work for him and he tell bad lie. He says all black people no good, he whip them. He says Mendi men steal, he tell lie, he is wicked, very bad. He says Mendi people drink rum, he tell lie...

...My friend, I want you to tell Mr. Adams about Pendleton he bad. The Lord God want all men to be good and love him, the Lord. Jesus Christ came down to make us turn from sins. He sent the Bible to do good on earth. My friend, I want you to pray to the great God to make us free and go our home and see our friend[s] in Mendi country. We want to see our friends in African Country and we shall pray to God to make our \_\_\_\_ very good and we want the God to have mercy on our friend[s].

Your dear friends

Cinque





# Cinqué Portrait by Nathaniel Jocelyn



SOURCE: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, [https://npg.si.edu/object/npg\\_NPG.69.66](https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.69.66).

# LA AMISTAD: IN THEIR OWN WORDS



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did African people *win* their freedom in the Amistad case as opposed to *being granted* freedom?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore the key events and significance of the 1839 Amistad rebellion.
- Describe the legal status of slavery in the U.S. in 1839 and the society into which the Amistad captives were taken.
- Analyze primary source documents that reveal the voice and agency of the kidnapped African people.
- Write a newspaper article exploring how the Amistad captives won their freedom.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project handouts and play an audio interview
- *Slavery in the U.S. at the Time of the Amistad: A Snapshot* handout (one copy to project)
- *In Their Own Words* handout (one per student)
- *Report of Cinque's Testimony* handout (one per student)
- *Letter from Kale* handout (one per student)



## VOCABULARY

Amistad	enslaver	import/importation
abolitionist	fugitive	Mendi
emancipation	Fugitive Slave Act	
enslaved	gradual emancipation	

# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## PART I

### The World Forced Upon Them—The U.S. at the Time of the *Amistad* (20 mins.)

#### NOTE

The film *Amistad* has been celebrated for educating viewers about the brutality of the slave trade and conveying the perspectives of the African people who were victimized by it. It has also been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes, for example of the “noble savage” and “white savior.” Help students to see these contradictions, even in the brief film trailer, and to think critically about how media influences our understanding of the history of slavery.

- 1 Play the trailer for the film *Amistad* [2:36]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJFDOvGMD0U>. Ask students if they are aware of the rebellion that took place aboard the ship *La Amistad* in 1839, and the subsequent Court case. Allow them to share prior knowledge, and provide background as needed using the following article or a source of your choosing: <https://www.history.com/topics/abolitionist-movement/amistad-case>.
- 2 Ask students: “What was the legal status of slavery in the U.S. in 1839?” In small groups, have them discuss what laws and practices they think existed at this time that either supported or prohibited slavery. Have them write each idea on a separate sticky note. Emphasize this is just a brainstorm, and they don’t have to be certain their ideas are correct.
- 3 One at a time, invite groups to share the contents of one of their sticky notes and, as a class, determine if it is accurate. As the discussion progresses, have groups add to and sort their sticky notes so they are tracking what is and isn’t correct. Project the handout *Slavery in the U.S. at the Time of the Amistad: A Snapshot*, to help guide the discussion, and allow students to conduct additional research as needed to clarify their understanding.

- 4 Comment that the 53 African people aboard the *Amistad* arrived in a foreign land deeply divided over slavery, where a majority of the white citizenry regarded them as less than human. They didn't know the language or customs, yet they were able to win their freedom. Share that in this lesson, students will explore documents revealing how these individuals were able to assert their voice and secure their own liberty.

## PART II


### Winning Their Own Freedom (40 mins.)

- 5 Distribute the handout *In Their Own Words* to students and review the directions with them. Play the following audio lecture, produced by the Mystic Seaport Museum: *The Amistad Rebellion by Dr. Marcus Rediker—Episode 11, Building an Alliance/Interactions in Jail* [6:03] (scroll to the bottom of the page to access episode 11): [https://educators.mystic-seaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad\\_rebellion](https://educators.mystic-seaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad_rebellion). Direct students to take notes in the first row on the handout as they listen. After, discuss the following questions:
- How was the period of imprisonment a time of learning as much for the white abolitionists as for the African captives?
  - How were the African people able to tell their own story, in their own words, to the American people?
  - What does Dr. Rediker mean when he says the Africans and the American abolitionists had a “different project”? What were the goals and priorities of each group?
  - How did the African people resist American efforts to “civilize” or reform them? What strategies did they use to assert their own identity and needs?
- 6 Tell students they will continue their investigation by reviewing two primary source documents. Distribute the handouts *Report of Cinque's Testimony* and *Letter from Kale*. Individually or in pairs, direct students to read and annotate the documents and to continue adding notes to the graphic organizer they began earlier. When students have completed their work, gather the class and discuss key observations and questions that arose from their analysis.

#### NOTE

Students may be interested to learn of the fate of Kale (sometimes spelled Kali), who was 10 years old when kidnapped from his home, and one of only four children aboard the *Amistad*. After being freed, Kale engaged audiences with his intelligence and command of English as the African people embarked on a fundraising tour to earn their passage home. Kale impressed mostly white, Christian groups with his ability to correctly write any sentence read to him from the Christian gospels. After returning home in 1842, he stayed with American missionaries, was employed by the Mendi mission, and married. As a young man, he contracted a disease that disabled him for the remainder of his life.<sup>1</sup>

1 Sillinger, Brett. *Sierra Leone: Current Issues and Background*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Pub Inc., 2003.

- 
- 7 Share information about the verdict with students: On March 9, 1841, the Supreme Court ruled 7-1 in favor of the Africans. Justice Joseph Story, in his majority opinion, wrote: “There does not seem to us to be any ground for doubt, that these negroes ought to be deemed free.” While Justice Story did not state that slavery in its entirety was wrong, he did assert that the Africans on the Amistad had been free, were illegally kidnapped and, therefore, could not be considered slaves. The decision supported the idea that human beings should not be thought of as property, and was critically important in the battle against slavery. In 1842, the triumphant 35 surviving Africans returned to their homeland. The U.S. government refused to pay for their passage, so the funds had to be raised by private abolitionist groups.
  - 8 Conclude the lesson by engaging students in a conversation using some of the discussion questions below, and highlighting the ways in which the Amistad captives advocated for their own freedom rather than simply waiting for others to grant it to them.
  - 9 As a follow-up assignment, have students imagine they are journalists covering the Amistad decision in 1841. Direct them to write a brief article entitled “In Their Own Words” that explains how the African captives used their own voice and agency to win their freedom.



# Discussion Questions

- 1 Describe the U.S. society the African people aboard the Amistad were forced into in 1839. What thoughts and feelings do you imagine they had as they entered this new world?
- 2 What arguments did the Africans mount for their own defense? How were they effective?
- 3 In an interview with Professor Rediker, he corrects himself after stating the captives were “granted freedom,” and instead says they “won their freedom.” What is the difference, and why is it important?
- 4 What qualities did it take for the African captives to win their freedom in a foreign and often hostile land?
- 5 Do you think the fate of the Amistad captives would have been different if the ship had been intercepted in a Southern state? Explain.
- 6 Has your understanding of the Amistad rebellion and the African people aboard the ship changed as a result of this lesson? Explain.
- 7 How is the history you learned from analyzing the primary source documents different from other narratives you have heard about the experiences of enslaved people?

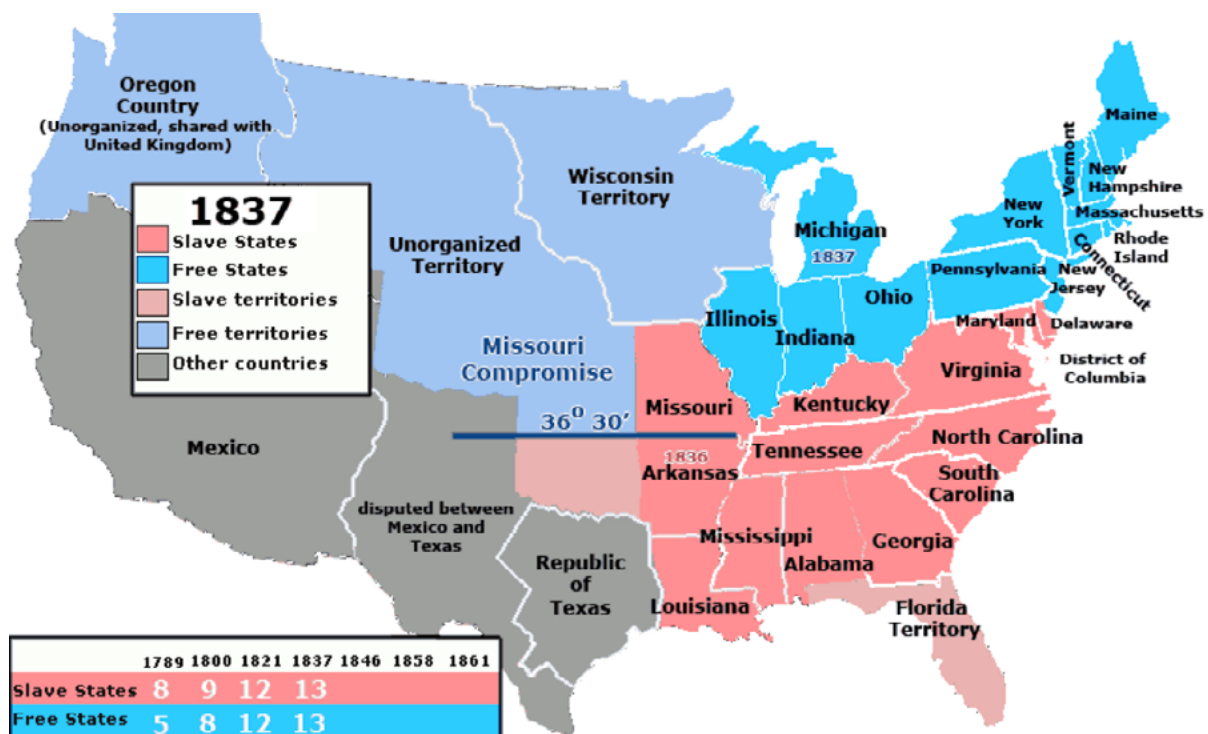
## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Linder, Douglas. “The Amistad Trials: An Account.” <https://famous-trials.com/amistad/1241-account>.
- + Mystic Seaport Museum. “Scholar Interviews: Interview of Dr. Marcus Rediker.” <https://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/interviews/rediker>.
- + Mystic Seaport Museum. “Audio Lectures: The Amistad Rebellion by Dr. Marcus Rediker.” [https://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad\\_rebellion](https://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/lectures/amistad_rebellion).
- + Slave Voyages. “Explore the Dispersal of Enslaved Africans Across the Atlantic World.” <https://www.slavevoyages.org>.
- + Thirteen/WNET. Slavery and the Making of America. <https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/index.html>.



# Slavery in the U.S. at the Time of the Amistad: A Snapshot

YEAR	LAW or PRACTICE
1793	The <b>Fugitive Slave Act</b> made it a crime to shelter people escaping enslavement or to interfere with the arrest of an enslaved person.
1794	The <b>Federal Slave Trade Act</b> prohibited American vessels from transporting enslaved people to any foreign country and from outfitting ships for the purpose of importing enslaved people.
1807	The <b>Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves of 1807</b> banned the African slave trade, making it illegal to import any further enslaved people into the U.S. (though people of African descent already in the U.S. could still be legally enslaved).
1818/ 1827	" <b>Gradual emancipation</b> " laws freed enslaved people in stages—in Connecticut (where the Amistad captives were jailed and tried) by 1818 and New York (where the Amistad was first seized) by 1827.
1827	Some Northern states, however, supported slavery in other ways, such as: permitting enslavers from other states to bring in enslaved people; allowing slave ships to anchor and restock in their states; and arresting and returning those escaping enslavement to their former enslavers.
1820	<b>The Piracy Act</b> made participation in the international slave trade punishable by death.
1839	Slavery was legal in 13 Southern states and prohibited in 13 Northern states (see map below).



MAP SOURCE: Wikipedia. "Slave States and Free States." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave\\_states\\_and\\_free\\_states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave_states_and_free_states).



# IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Listen to/read the documents below and annotate them by highlighting key phrases and jotting thoughts and questions. Add notes to the chart that show how the African captives stood up for their freedom and told their story, in their own words.

## HOW DID THE AFRICAN PEOPLE...

DOCUMENT/SUMMARY	tell their story and convey their identity?	communicate their needs and demands?	strategize to win their freedom?
<p><b>Audio lecture by Dr. Marcus Rediker: Building an Alliance/ Interactions in Jail (July 2012)</b>                      In this talk, an expert on the Amistad rebellion discusses how the African captives educated themselves, collaborated and strategized to gain their freedom.</p>			
<p><b>Report of Cinqué’s Testimony (January 10, 1840)</b>                      In this news article, the court testimony of Joseph Cinqué, the leader of the Amistad rebellion, is summarized. In his testimony, Cinqué describes his kidnapping and the mistreatment he experienced aboard the Amistad.</p>			
<p><b>Letter from Kale (January 4, 1841)</b>                      In this document, 12-year-old Kale sends an emotional appeal to his attorney, the former U.S. President John Quincy Adams. He stands up for his people, demands their freedom and challenges the U.S. to live up to its ideals.</p>			



# Report of Cinqué's Testimony

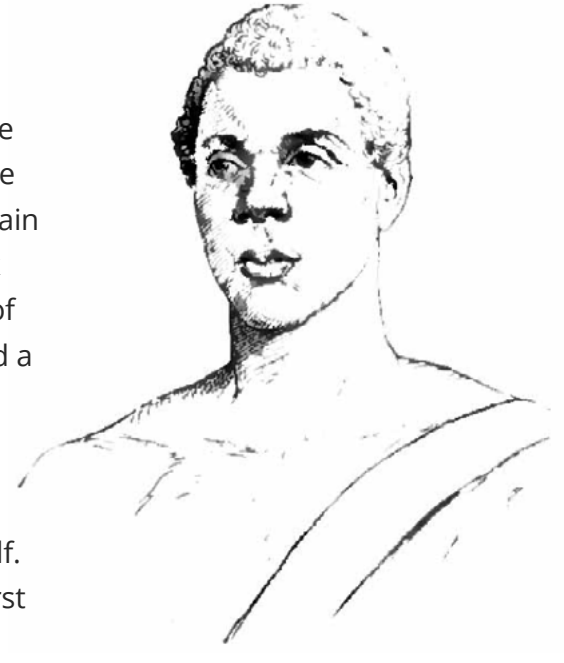
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

*This report of Joseph Cinqué's testimony in court was published in the New York Journal of Commerce on January 10, 1840.*

Cinque, the leader of the Africans, was then examined. Cinque told Captain Gedney he might take the vessel and keep it, if he would send them to Sierra Leone. His conversation with Captain Gedney was carried on by the aid of Bernar, who could speak a little English. They had taken on board part of their supply of water, and wanted to go to Sierra Leone. They were three and a half months coming from Havana to this country.

Cross examined by General Isham. Cinque said he came from Mendi. He was taken in the road where he was at work, by countrymen. He was not taken in battle. He did not sell himself. He was taken to Lomboko, where he met the others for the first time. Those who took him—four men—had a gun and knives. Has three children in Africa. Has one wife. Never said he had two wives. Can't count the number of days after leaving Havana before the rising upon the vessel. The man who had charge of the schooner was killed. Then he and Pepe sailed the vessel. Witness told Pepe, after Ferrer was killed, to take good care of the cargo.

The brig fired a gun, and then they gave themselves up. When they first landed there they were put in prison. Were not chained. They were chained coming from Africa to Havana, hands and feet. They were chained also on board the Amistad. Were kept short of provisions. Were beaten on board the schooner by one of the sailors. When they had taken the schooner they put the Spaniards down in the hold and locked them down.



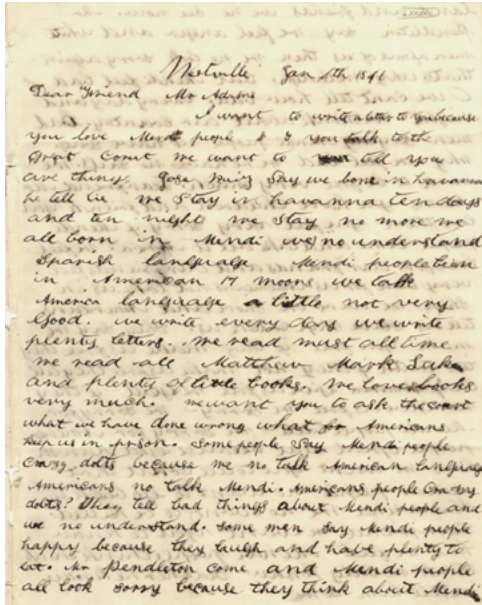
ARTICLE SOURCE: Spartacus Educational. "Amistad Mutiny Primary Sources." <https://spartacus-educational.com/USASamistad.htm>.

IMAGE SOURCE: Jacques Reich (based on the 1840 portrait by Nathaniel Jocelyn), *Portrait drawing of Joseph Cinqué, the African leader of the "Amistad" revolt*, 1900, Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography, 1900, v. 1, p. 616, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Appletons%27\\_Cinque.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Appletons%27_Cinque.jpg).



# Letter from Kale

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



Westville, Jan. 4, 1841

Dear Friend Mr. Adams:

I want to write a letter to you because you love Mendi people, and you talk to the grand court. We want to tell you one thing. Jose Ruiz say we born in Havana, he tell lie. We stay in Havana 10 days and 10 nights. We stay no more. We all born in Mendi—we no understand the Spanish language. Mendi people been in America 17 moons. We talk America language a little, not very good. We write every day; we write plenty letters. We read most all time. We read all Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, and plenty of little books. We love books very much. We want you to ask the Court what we have done wrong. What for Americans keep us in prison. Some people say Mendi people crazy, Mendi people dolt [*stupid person*], because we no talk America language. America people no talk Mendi language. American people crazy dolts? They tell bad things about Mendi

people and we no understand. Some men say Mendi people very happy because they laugh and have plenty to eat. Mr. Pendleton come and Mendi people all look sorry because they think about Mendiland and friends we no see now. Mr. Pendleton say we feel anger and white men afraid of us. Then we no look sorry again. That's why we laugh. But Mendi people feel bad. O, we can't tell how bad. Some people say, Mendi people no have souls. Why we feel bad, we no have no souls? We want to be free very much.

Dear friend Mr. Adams, you have children, you have friends, you love them, you feel very sorry if Mendi people come and take all to Africa. We feel bad for our friends, and our friends all feel bad for us. Americans not take us in ship. We were on shore and Americans tell us slave ship catch us. They say we make you free. If they make us free they tell truth, if they not make us free they tell lie. If America give us free we glad, if they no give us free we sorry—we sorry for Mendi people little, we sorry for America people great deal because God punish liars. We want you to tell court that Mendi people no want to go back to Havanna, we no want to be killed. Dear friend, we want you to know how we feel. Mendi people think, think, think. nobody know. Teacher, he know, we tell him some. Mendi people have got souls. We think we know God punish us if we tell lie. We never tell lie; we speak the truth. What for Mendi people afraid? Because they have got souls. Cook say he kill, he eat Mendi people—we afraid—we kill cook. Then captain kill one man with knife, and cut Mendi people plenty. We never kill captain if he no kill us. If Court ask who bring Mendi people to America, we bring ourselves. Ceci hold the rudder. All we want is make us free, not send us to Havanna. Send us home. Give us Missionary. We tell Mendi people Americans spoke truth. We give them good tidings. We tell them there is one god. You must worship him. Make us free and we will bless you and all Mendi people will bless you, Dear friend Mr. Adams.

Your friend,  
Kale

SOURCES: Digital History. "Letter from Kale to John Quincy Adams." [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3927](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3927); Massachusetts Historical Society. "Kale's Letter." <https://www.masshist.org/objects/cabinet/january2003/kale.htm>.

# How did the people of New Jersey both profit from and resist chattel slavery?

If you asked your students—or most adults for that matter—to identify where slavery thrived in the United States, they would probably not say New Jersey. However, enslaved labor was common in New Jersey from the establishment of the settlement in the 1660s and throughout the colonial era. New Jersey was the last Northern state to abolish slavery in 1804; and it was the 32nd (of 36 states) to ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1866, taking almost a full year to sanction the abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude.

In 1664, the British took control of the area that is New Jersey and divided it in half, giving control of the east side to Sir George Carteret and the west side to Lord John Berkley. In order to develop agriculture and business, a bounty of 60 or more acres of land was offered to any man for each enslaved person he brought to the colony. Slavery became vital to the New Jersey economy in the ensuing decades, and the population of enslaved people rose from under 4,000 in 1737 to more than 12,000 in 1800.<sup>1</sup> Slavery thrived, in particular, on the east side of New Jersey. The major port of entry for enslaved labor was Perth Amboy, and the greatest number of enslaved people lived in Bergen County, where they comprised almost 20 percent of the population at one time.<sup>2</sup>

On the west side of New Jersey, Quaker communities organized early against slavery, prohibiting the practice in their 1676 charter. Together with free Black people and other abolitionists, they pressured the state government to enact laws banning the slave trade, fining abusive enslavers, and financially supporting freed Black people. In 1786, New Jersey outlawed the importation of enslaved people, and in 1804 they passed “An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery,” requiring that females born to enslaved parents after July 4, 1804, be emancipated at age 21 and males at age 25. During this era, New Jersey was also an important part of the eastern corridor for the Underground Railroad, linking slave states in the upper South with New York and points north. From Somers Point to Camden to Trenton, “station masters,” “agents” and “conductors” provided shelter and transit to tens of thousands of freedom seekers. William Still, a New Jersey-born Black abolitionist and “Father of the Underground Railroad,” helped as many as 800 enslaved people escape to freedom<sup>3</sup> and collaborated with Harriet Tubman and John Brown’s associates after the raid on Harpers Ferry.

1 Robert Hennessee, “Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey’s DNA,” *Salon*, July 29, 2015, [https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret\\_history\\_of\\_a\\_northern\\_slave\\_state\\_how\\_slavery\\_was\\_written\\_into\\_new\\_jerseys\\_dna](https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna).

2 Robert Hennessee, “Secret history of a northern slave state.”

3 Rachel Chang, “How Harriet Tubman and William Still Helped the Underground Railroad,” *Biography.com*, July 14, 2020, <https://www.biography.com/news/harriet-tubman-william-still-helped-slaves-escape-underground-railroad>.

Despite New Jersey's critical role in the Underground Railroad and abolition, the state was slow to phase out slavery. In 1830, there were more than 2,300 enslaved people in New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> "An Act to Abolish Slavery" theoretically banned the practice in 1846, but in actuality it just reclassified enslaved people as "apprentices for life." Though more than 88,000 white soldiers from New Jersey fought for freedom in the Civil War,<sup>5</sup> recent research indicates that as many as 400 people remained enslaved in the state until the end of the war.<sup>6</sup> As the U.S. entered the

Reconstruction era, New Jersey became the last Northern state to ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (barring slavery), and only ratified the 15th Amendment (granting Black men the right to vote) in 1871, after initially rejecting it a year earlier. New Jersey initially ratified the 14th Amendment (addressing citizenship rights and equal protection) in 1866, but then rescinded its ratification in 1868. Though the U.S. officially adopted the amendment later that year, the state of New Jersey did not get around to formally approving it until April 23, 2003.

4 Gail R. Safian, "Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History," Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association Inc. in consultation with South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>.

5 Gail R. Safian, "Slavery in New Jersey."

6 Robert Hannelley, "Secret history of a northern slave state."

# SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What was the Underground Railroad and how did it help enslaved people gain their right of freedom? What role did the people of New Jersey play in the Underground Railroad and the struggle against slavery?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe the Underground Railroad and its significance in the abolition of chattel slavery.
- Investigate Harriet Tubman’s role as a leader in the Underground Railroad.
- Explore New Jersey’s role in the Underground Railroad and map key stops along the route.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

45 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video
- *On Track or Off the Rails?* handout (one per student or one copy to read aloud)
- *On Track or Off the Rails Cards* handout (copied and cut apart so each student gets one of each card)
- *Underground Railroad Routes in New Jersey* handout (one per student or pair)
- *New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad* handout (one per student)



## VOCABULARY

abolitionist

enslaver

Quaker

enslaved

plantation

Underground Railroad



# Procedures

## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

- 1 Write “Underground Railroad” on the board. Ask students if they have ever heard this term and what they know about it. Allow students to share their prior knowledge in pairs or as a class, but don’t confirm or negate their ideas at this point.
- 2 Tell students they will watch a video to learn more about the Underground Railroad and an important figure in history named Harriet Tubman. Inform students that, after the video, they will play a game called “On Track or Off the Rails,” to test what they have learned. Depending on the level of challenge you wish to provide, either distribute and preview the statements on the handout *On Track or Off the Rails?*, or reserve them until after the video. Show students *Harriet Tubman—A Kid Explains History, Episode 13* (4:20): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YAPVs233Hc>.
- 3 Provide each student with one “On Track” and one “Off the Rails” card (see the handout, *On Track or Off the Rails Cards*). Explain that you will read a series of statements and they should decide—based on the video—if each statement is true (“On Track”) or false (“Off the Rails”). One at a time, read aloud each statement from the *On Track or Off the Rails?* handout. Have students respond by standing and raising the appropriate card above their heads or by moving with their card to a designated side of the room. Reveal the correct answer and provide any necessary clarification for each statement before moving onto the next one.

## NOTE

The correct answers are as follows: 1-F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-F, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T, 10-F, 11-T.

## NOTE

In 1804, the New Jersey Legislature passed the Act for the Gradual Emancipation of Slavery. It provided that children born to enslaved women after July 4, 1804, would be free. However, girls were obligated to serve their mother's enslaver until age 21, and boys until 25. All people born before July 4, 1804, were enslaved for life unless freed by their enslavers. Slavery persisted in New Jersey until the end of the Civil War, in 1865. In 1866, New Jersey became the last Northern state to ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery.

- 4 For an extra challenge, have students, in pairs or small groups, come up with one or more additional true or false statements about the Underground Railroad they think can “derail” their classmates. Allow groups to join together and attempt to stump one another with their statements.
- 5 Tell students you have one more “On Track or Off the Rails” statement for them. Read aloud or post the following: “New Jersey was a major route along the Underground Railroad.” Have students confer and hold up the card that matches their response. Confirm it is indeed true that New Jersey had many secret safe houses and active abolitionists working to help enslaved people find freedom. Note it is also true that New Jersey was the last Northern state to abolish slavery. Allow students to react to this contradiction.
- 6 Distribute the following handouts and review the instructions on the first one with students: *Underground Railroad Routes in New Jersey* and *New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad*. Independently or in pairs, direct students to read about at least three stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey and represent them on the map using drawings, symbols, captions and other ways of conveying key information. When they are done, allow students to share their maps in small groups and discuss why they selected their locations and which facts most surprised them.
- 7 Gather the class and discuss any questions students may have as a result of their Underground Railroad research. In addition, use some of the discussion questions below to deepen students’ understanding of chattel slavery in New Jersey.

# Discussion Questions

1

Why is it important to learn about the Underground Railroad?

2

What were some ways that people moved along the Underground Railroad?

3

What are examples of “stations” on the Underground Railroad?

4

What were the risks to “station masters” and “conductors,” like Harriet Tubman, when helping people escape? Why do you think both free and enslaved people took these risks?

5

What stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey did you find most inspiring?

6

Were you surprised to learn that New Jersey was the last Northern state to end chattel slavery? Why?

7

In the United States, why do we study slavery and how people tried to escape it?

# Lesson Extensions

➤ Conduct a read-aloud of *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* by Ellen Levine. This book tells the true story of Henry "Box" Brown, who escaped slavery in Virginia by having himself shipped in a crate to Philadelphia. Then have students construct their own "freedom boxes" (using discarded milk cartons, cereal boxes, etc.) and fill it with written and/or visual reflections about challenges to freedom and justice in today's world that they would like to "ship away."

➤ Assign students to select one historical figure from the list below and create a video or other multimedia presentation about the person's contributions to ending slavery.

Abigail Goodwin (1793–1897)

Reverend Thomas C. Oliver (1818–1900)

Charles Fern Hopkins (1842–1934)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Fiaschetti, Patricia Weigold. "Freedom's Path: The Underground Railroad in NJ." 23 January 2015. <https://njmonthly.com/articles/historic-jersey/freedoms-path-underground-railroad-nj>.
- + *Harriet*. Directed by Kasi Lemmons. Focus Features, 2019.
- + New Jersey Underground Railroad Heritage. "Steal Away, Steal Away..." <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10929/24563/h6732002.pdf?sequence=1>.

- + NJTV News. "NJ Stops Along the Underground Railroad." February 16, 2015. YouTube video, 3:14. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9e4nWro68>.
- + NJTV News. "Stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey." February 16, 2012. YouTube video, 3:06. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGAgpJUiWjE>.
- + PBS. "Henry 'Box' Brown." <https://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/stories-free-dom/henry-box-brown>.

- + Safian, Gail R. "Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History." Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association Inc. in consultation with South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>.
- + Scholastic.com. "The Underground Railroad Teaching Guide." <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/teacher-activity-guide-underground-railroad>.
- + Whitehead, Coleson. *Underground Railroad*. New York: Double Day, 2016.



# On Track or Off the Rails?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the video *Harriet Tubman—A Kid Explains History*, do you think the following statements are *on track* (true) or *off the rails* (false)? Can you come up with one or more additional statements that will *derail* your classmates? Write them at the bottom.

## OT or OtR?

- 1 The Underground Railroad was a network of secret, underground tunnels.

---

- 2 The Underground Railroad was a network of people who provided secret routes and safe houses to help free enslaved people.

---

- 3 “Stations” on the Underground Railroad included barns, churches and even caves.

---

- 4 Abolitionists were Black people who wanted to end slavery.

---

- 5 Harriet Tubman was freed by her enslavers, which is why she was able to become a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad.

---

- 6 The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was a law saying that enslaved people who escaped had to be returned to their enslavers, even if they were in a free state.

---

- 7 The best night to begin trips on the Underground Railroad was Friday because the plantation owners enjoyed long dinners with their families at the end of the week.

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- 8 Harriet Tubman sometimes threatened “passengers” with a gun if they were afraid to continue the journey north.

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- 9 Many enslaved people headed to Canada because slavery there was abolished in 1833 (32 years before the U.S.).

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- 10 During the Combahee River Raid of 1863, plantation owners killed over 700 enslaved people.

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- 11 Harriet Tubman worked as a nurse, a spy and a guide for troops during the Civil War.

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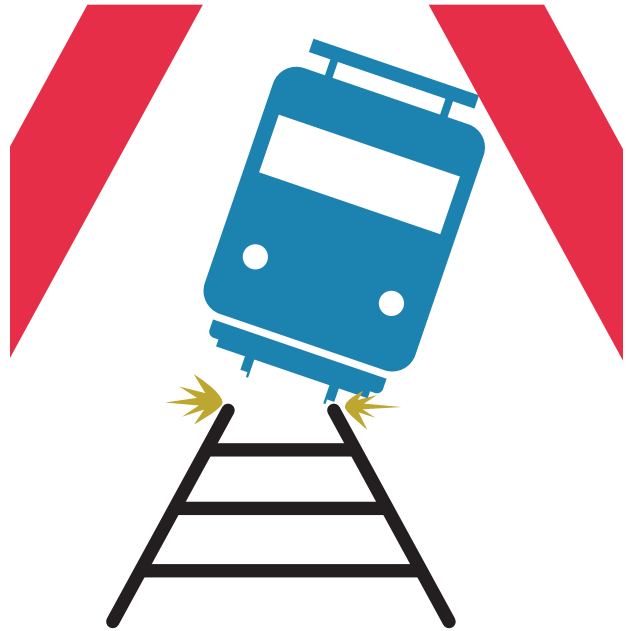


# On Track or Off the Rails Cards

**ON TRACK**



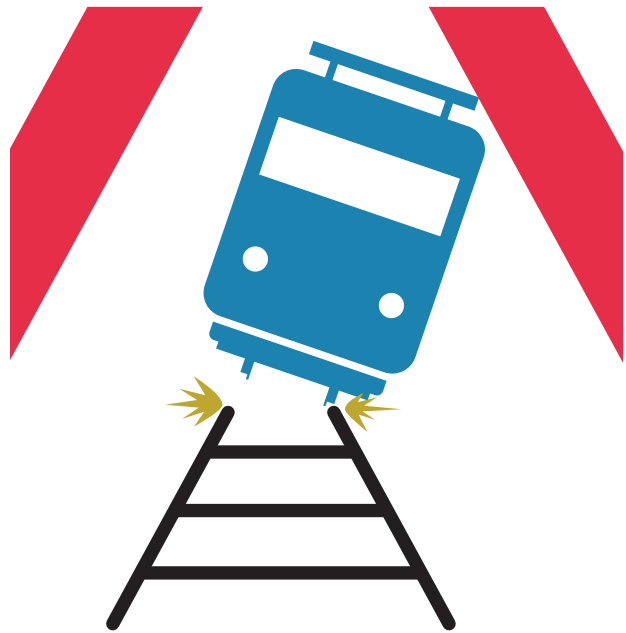
**OFF THE RAILS**



**ON TRACK**



**OFF THE RAILS**

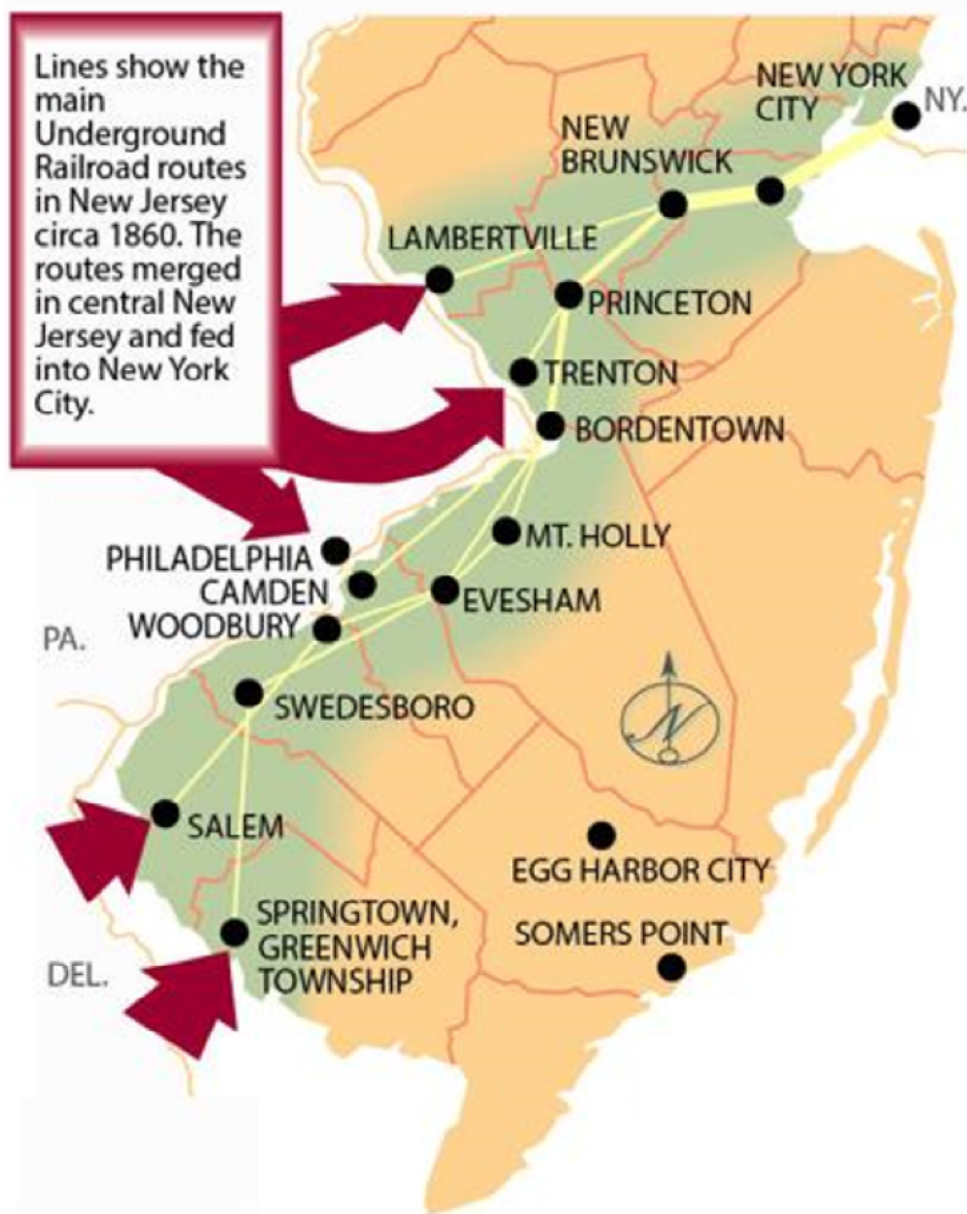




# Underground Railroad Routes in New Jersey

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the handout *New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad*. Choose three that you find interesting and add more information about them on the map. For each, include a short summary and a drawing that shows the importance of the site. Add additional illustrations to your map that represent the Underground Railroad.



MAP SOURCE: The Press of Atlantic City. Used with permission by Krishna Mathias.



# New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Communities such as Somers Point and Egg Harbor City** offered freedom seekers a direct path to Pennsylvania, where slavery had been abolished. Michelle Craig McDonald, a professor of history at Stockton University, says: "The goal of slaves on the Underground Railroad was to make it to Pennsylvania...Think about New Jersey as the gateway or the last stop in a journey. When you got to Egg Harbor City you knew freedom was days away."
- 2 The Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church** in Swedesboro was built in 1834. The church doors were always left unlocked so freedom seekers passing through on the Underground Railroad could let themselves in for a rest. If slave catchers showed up in the area, runaways would be hidden in a secret room beneath a hallway in the church.
- 3 The Edgewater House** was built in 1741 in Cherry Hill, Camden County. It was owned by Thomas Evans and later by his son, Josiah Bispham Evans. They were both members of the Quaker religion and believed that slavery was wrong. By 1840, Edgewater was a safe house on the Underground Railroad. The Evans family passed down stories about the Underground Railroad to their family members. They said freedom seekers coming from Woodbury were hidden in the "haymow" (attic) and then "hurried off in a covered wagon to Mount Holly."
- 4 The Bordentown Friends Meetinghouse**, built in the 1740s, served as a shelter for freedom seekers during the time of slavery. Bordentown was known as "Station B" on the Underground Railroad, and three routes passed through the town. One went from Philadelphia north to Princeton. Another line ran east through Station B. There was also a southern route. Bordentown was a busy intersection on the road to freedom.
- 5 Members of the Buckingham and Lambertville** communities were outraged when Benjamin "Big Ben" Jones was captured by four slave catchers in a bloody struggle in 1844. Benjamin, who stood 6 feet 10 inches tall, had escaped from Maryland and settled in the area in 1833. The towns of Buckingham and Lambertville had ended slavery in 1776. Now they held anti-slavery talks and events at the Buckingham Friends Meeting House and other locations. They also raised \$700 (almost \$20,000 in today's money) to buy Benjamin out of slavery. He returned to the area, where he lived to the age of 75.





# New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

- 6 Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church** in Springtown, Greenwich Township, is one of the oldest Black churches in New Jersey. It dates back to the early 1800s, when Springtown was a swamp area. We know about at least five members of the church who were secret Underground Railroad members. They probably hid runaways from Delaware and Maryland at the church and on their own properties.
- 7 Fort Stockton** in Woodbury was an important station for Civil War soldiers fighting against slavery. A marker on the site tells us it was the “training ground for the men of the 12th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry...considered one of the ‘fightingest’ regiments of the Union Army.” Of the 992 soldiers from Fort Stockton who fought in the war, only 278 returned.
- 8 John Coleman** was a Black pioneer and an Underground Railroad operator near Evesham and Mount Laurel. He worked tirelessly to provide hiding places for freedom seekers and to build the network of people and places on the Underground Railroad. He was so respected by his community that they named the area Colemantown.
- 9 Sampson Peters House and Cooper Shop** is an important site in Trenton's history. Sampson Peters was born into slavery in East Windsor in 1771. He was set free in 1802 and moved to Trenton, where he opened a cooper (barrel-making) shop. The shop was a meeting place for a group he helped form, called the Religious Society of Free Africans. Sampson was an abolitionist. He also spoke out against the movement to return free Black people to Africa. Sampson lived to the age of 74.
- 10 Crossing the Raritan River** near New Brunswick was dangerous. Slave catchers often patrolled the area. Conductors on the Underground Railroad worked with a spy named Cornelius Cornell, who lived near New Brunswick. He would signal when it was safe to cross the river. Freedom seekers could then head to Jersey City along the Hudson River, and ferry to New York City. There, they hoped to catch a train north to freedom.



# New Jersey Stops on the Underground Railroad

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

- 11 The Goodwin Sisters House** was an Underground Railroad station in Salem by 1838. It was operated by Abigail Goodwin and her sister, Elizabeth. They were Quakers, a religious group that promotes peace and fought against slavery in the 1800s. We know about the Goodwin sisters through a diary kept by their nephew and letters written between the sisters and a Philadelphia station master named William Still.
- 12 The Peter Mott House** is a special place because it is one of the only Underground Railroad stations owned and operated by African Americans. The house, built around 1844, is in Lawnside in Camden County. Peter Mott was a free Black farmer who may have escaped from enslavement in Maryland. He was also the pastor of a church in Lawnside. The community of Lawnside was officially recognized as a town in 1926, and was the only all-Black community in New Jersey.
- 13 The Thomas Budd House**, built around 1744, is the oldest structure in Mount Holly that's still on its original site. Thomas Budd was a plantation owner, but later his house was used to hide enslaved people on the Underground Railroad. The house's basement has a tunnel in the corner, which was used to secretly transport people. Today the building is a bookstore.
- 14 Paul Robeson**, born in Princeton in 1898, was one of the most important Black leaders of the past century. He was a singer, actor, athlete, author and civil rights activist. He was also the son of a man who was born into slavery. William Drew Robeson was born in 1844 and enslaved on a plantation in North Carolina. At age 15, William escaped slavery with his brother, Ezekiel, on the Underground Railroad. After serving in the Union Army during the Civil War and attending college, William settled in Princeton and became the minister of the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church from 1880 until 1901.

#### SOURCES:

Historic Sites of Trenton. "Sampson Peters House and Cooper Shop." <http://www.mappler.net/site5/african-american-historic-sites/historic-buildings-clubs-and-meeting-houses/sampson-peters-house-and-cooper-shop>.

Jacob's Chapel A.M.E. Church. "Church History." <https://www.jacobschapelame.org/our-past>.

New Jersey Historical Commission. "'Steal Away, Steal Away...': A Guide to the Underground Railroad in New Jersey." <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10929/24563/h6732002.pdf?sequence=1>.

NJ.gov. "New Jersey History Kids: A Description of the Underground Railroad Routes Through New Jersey." [https://www.state.nj.us/state/historykids/pdfs/underground\\_railroad/description\\_of%20\\_routes.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/state/historykids/pdfs/underground_railroad/description_of%20_routes.pdf).

Visit Bucks County. "Tour the Underground Railroad in Bucks County." <https://www.visitbuckscounty.com/things-to-do/planning-ideas/underground-railroad>.

Women History Blog. "Underground Railroad in New Jersey." <https://www.womenhistoryblog.com/2015/10/underground-railroad-in-new-jersey.html>.

# SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How did New Jersey participate in and profit from chattel slavery? How did enslaved people and abolitionists resist and ultimately end slavery in New Jersey?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Investigate a museum exhibit on slavery in New Jersey.
- Identify factors that supported the introduction and expansion of chattel slavery in New Jersey.
- Explain how enslaved people and abolitionists resisted and brought an end to slavery in New Jersey.
- Research resistance and abolition in New Jersey, and create a work product reflecting what they have learned.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

90–150 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project images
- [Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History](#) (one copy per student or online access)
- *15 Dollars Reward* handout (one to project)
- *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey* handout (one per student)
- *Scavenger Hunt* handout (one per student)
- *Scavenger Hunt Answer Key* handout (one for the teacher)
- *Running Away* handout (one to project)
- *Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition* handout (one per student)
- Laptops or tablets for student research



## VOCABULARY

abolition/ abolitionist	Proclamation	importation	resistance
bondage	enslaved	manumit/ manumission	servitude
chattel slavery	enslaver	plantation	slave codes
Emancipation	fugitive	Quaker	Underground Railroad
	import/		

# Procedures

## NOTES

In this lesson, students examine the exhibit *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*. The high school lesson on this topic engages students in a higher-level investigation of the same exhibit. See that lesson if some or all of your students are ready for more challenging work.

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## PART I

### Introducing the *Slavery in New Jersey Exhibit* (20 minutes)

- 1 Project the handout *15 Dollars Reward*, and have students discuss the following questions in pairs:
  - Where and when do you think this ad might have been printed?
  - How do you know? What clues in the text or prior knowledge led to your conclusions?
  - What stands out about the way the “negro man” is described? How does this make you feel?
- 2 Reveal that the ad was printed in *The Centinel of Freedom* in Newark, New Jersey, on August 4, 1818, and submitted by a resident of Pine Brook in Morris County. Share that slavery was not legally abolished in New Jersey until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment became law in 1865. Ask students if they are surprised that slavery existed in New Jersey for so long. Discuss why people might not associate the Northern states with slavery.

- 3 Tell students that the ad was featured in an exhibit called *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*,<sup>1</sup> which was on display at the Durand-Hedden House, a historic house museum in Maplewood, New Jersey. Tell students they will be exploring the exhibit (available in a booklet form online) in class. Project the title page of the exhibit: <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>. Together, read the author’s note on page i and the opening paragraph on page 2.
- 4 For homework, assign students to read pages 2–10 of the exhibit. Provide them with either a copy of the booklet or the URL if they are able to access it online. Distribute the handout *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey*, and instruct students to complete it as they read through the exhibit. (Make sure students indicate the two sections of the exhibit they found most interesting, as this information will be used to form groups in the next part of the lesson.)

## PART II

### Slavery in New Jersey—Digging Deeper (30–40 minutes)

- 5 Have students take out (or access online) their homework and the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit. Gather students in small groups of 4–6, based on their response to the homework question about which section of the exhibit they found most interesting. Direct them to discuss why that section of the exhibit interested them and to share the notes they recorded for that part of the exhibit.
- 6 Distribute the *Scavenger Hunt* handout to each student and review the directions with them. Challenge groups to identify as many answers as possible by working collaboratively and reexamining pages 2–10 of the exhibit. Make it a friendly competition by setting a time limit and seeing which group is able to get the most correct answers in that period.
- 7 When time is up, review the answers with the class using the *Scavenger Hunt Answer Key*. Discuss items from the exhibit that students found confusing, surprising or otherwise noteworthy. Debrief using the following questions:

#### NOTE

If possible, enlarge pages 2–10 of the exhibit and post them around the room. Invite students to move around and view the posted panels as they work, so the experience feels a bit more like being in a museum.

1 Safian, Gail R. “Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History.” Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association Inc. in consultation with South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>.

- Why did slavery last for almost 200 years in New Jersey? What factors led some people to maintain this brutal practice?
- How would you compare New Jersey to other Northern states or to the United States as a whole when it comes to the practice of slavery?
- What were some of the forces opposing slavery in New Jersey? What methods of resistance helped to bring slavery to an end?

### PART III

## Focus on the Forces of Abolition (45–90 minutes, depending on the independent projects chosen)

**8** Project the handout *Running Away* (from page 9 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit). In pairs, have students discuss the details they notice and the story they think the image is telling. Ask them to imagine how trapped the young freedom seekers must have felt with guns and dogs trained on them and seemingly nowhere left to turn.

**9** Comment that escaping was one way enslaved people resisted slavery, but there were many other ways they demonstrated resistance. Write the following three categories of resistance on the board: (a) uprisings; (b) acts of defiance; and (c) spiritual and cultural acts. Ask students to provide examples of resistance in each category based on their reading of the exhibit, as well as other sources of information. List their examples on the board, which might include the following:

Uprisings	Acts of Defiance	Spiritual and Cultural Acts
→ Escaping	→ Engaging in work slowdowns	→ Marrying and forming families
→ Leading revolts or rebellions	→ Faking illness	→ Learning to read
→ Burning/destroying homes, barns and other property	→ Sabotage (e.g., breaking tools, injuring animals, damaging crops)	→ Writing about their experiences
→ Forming and joining abolition movements	→ Taking food, clothing and other supplies	→ Educating their children
		→ Learning/improving work skills
		→ Maintaining African traditions and religious worship
		→ Creating spirituals/music

- 10** Tell students they will work on an independent project focused on resistance and “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit. Post and review the following definitions:
  - Abolition: The act of getting rid of something
  - Abolitionist: A person taking action to eliminate slavery
- 11** Distribute the *Choice Board* handout and go over the options with students. Allow them to choose one project to work on individually or with a partner or small group. Provide students with access to laptops or tablets, as well as other relevant materials, and give them time in class to complete their projects.
- 12** When students are done, have them share and discuss their work in small groups that contain a mix of students who have completed different projects. Hang up work that is in a displayable form, and allow students to briefly examine their classmates’ projects.
- 13** As a class, debrief their experience delving into the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit using some of the discussion questions on the next page.

# Discussion Questions

- 1 Were you surprised to learn that slavery existed in New Jersey and other Northern states? Why?
- 2 What stood out to you or surprised you about the history of slavery in New Jersey?
- 3 How did New Jersey profit from chattel slavery?
- 4 Why do you think slavery lasted so long—almost 200 years—in New Jersey?
- 5 How has your understanding of slavery in our region changed?
- 6 How did enslaved people and their allies resist and bring an end to slavery? Which examples of resistance were new or inspiring to you?
- 7 Why do you think many people are unaware of the role of Northern states in slavery?
- 8 What questions still remain for you about slavery in New Jersey?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Harper, Douglas. "Slavery in the North." 2003. <http://slavenorth.com/slavenorth.htm>.
- + Hannelley, Robert. "Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey's DNA." *Salon*, July 29, 2015. [https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret\\_history\\_of\\_a\\_northern\\_slave\\_state\\_how\\_slavery\\_was\\_written\\_into\\_new\\_jerseys\\_dna](https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna).
- + New Jersey Women's History. "Middle School Lesson Plan: Slavery In New Jersey." <http://www.njwomenshistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Slavery-in-New-Jersey.pdf>.
- + NJTV News. "NJ Stops Along the Underground Railroad." February 16, 2015. YouTube video, 3:14. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_a9e4nWro68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_a9e4nWro68).
- + NJTV News. "Stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey." February 16, 2012. YouTube video, 3:06. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGAgpJUiWjE>.
- + PBS. "Underground Railroad: The William Still Story." <https://www.pbs.org/show/underground-railroad-william-still-story>.
- + Singer, Alan. "New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance." <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.572.8770&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.





# 15 Dollars Reward

## 15 Dollars Reward.

**R**AN-AWAY from the subscriber on the 4th inst. a negro Man, (a slave) named **NED**, about 20 years old—had on when he went away, a black coat and pantaloons, blue cassimere vest—a fur hat nearly new—is a active fellow, and fond of reading. Any person who will apprehend said runaway and return him to the owner, or secure him in any jail in this State so that he may be had again, shall be entitled to the above reward and reasonable charges.

SARAH VAN DUYN, *Admx.*  
of Jas. I. V. Duyn

Transcription:

### 15 Dollars Reward.

Ran-away from the subscriber on the 4th inst. a negro Man, (a slave) named Ned, about 20 years old—had on when he went away, a black coat and pantaloons, blue cassimere vest—a fur hat nearly new—is a active fellow, and fond of reading. Any person who will apprehend said runaway and return him to the owner, or secure him in any jail in this State so that he may be had again, shall be entitled to the above reward and reasonable charges.

Sarah Van Duyn, Admx.

Of Jas. I.V. Duyn



# Notes: Slavery in New Jersey

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Read pages 2-10 of the exhibit about the history of slavery in New Jersey. For each section, write notes on the chart in at least one column.

After reading, check the boxes below next to two sections of the exhibit you found most interesting or want to learn more about.

- How it All Started
- The Revolutionary War
- The Civil War
- The Growth of Slavery in NJ
- Slavery in NJ declined
- The Forces of Abolition

Why did you choose these sections? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SECTION	KEY DATES <i>Why is it Important?</i>	KEY PEOPLE <i>What Did They Do?</i>	KEY EVENTS <i>What Happened?</i>	QUESTIONS <i>What am I Curious About?</i>
Page 2: <i>How it all started</i>				
Page 3: <i>The Growth of Slavery in NJ</i>				



# Notes: Slavery in New Jersey

SECTION	KEY DATES <i>Why is it Important?</i>	KEY PEOPLE <i>What Did They Do?</i>	KEY EVENTS <i>What Happened?</i>	QUESTIONS <i>What am I Curious About?</i>
<p>Page 4: <i>The Revolutionary War</i></p>				
<p>Page 5: <i>Slavery in NJ declined</i></p>				
<p>Page 6: <i>The Civil War</i></p>				
<p>Pages 7–10: <i>The Forces of Abolition</i></p>				



# Scavenger Hunt

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

How many of the items below can you find in the exhibit *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*? Work with your group to identify as many as possible, and write your answers in the blank spaces.

ITEM	ANSWER AND PAGE NUMBER
1 In 1712 an enslaver had to pay £200 for this	
2 Only 15 of these people got this award during the Civil War	
3 She twice escaped from slavery	
4 County with the highest population of enslaved people in New Jersey	
5 In 1840, the percentage of enslaved Northerners who lived in New Jersey	
6 Why Canada was a safe haven	
7 An operator in Delaware and New Jersey	
8 More than 250,000 copies were published	
9 Law that created “slaves for a term”	
10 The anti-slavery area of New Jersey; BONUS: The people there who stood against slavery	
11 A new name for “slave” starting in 1846	
12 Nathaniel Seely’s demand	
13 What dollars, shillings and guineas were all used for	
14 This order didn’t free <u>all</u> enslaved people, but it allowed them to fight for freedom	
15 Two ways Black people secured their own freedom	



# Scavenger Hunt Answer Key

ITEM	ANSWER	PAGE NUMBER
1 In 1712 an enslaver had to pay £200 for this	Manumission (to free an enslaved person)	4
2 Only 15 of these people got this award during the Civil War	Colored Troops/Medal of Honor	6
3 She twice escaped from slavery	Charity Still, a matriarch of the American abolition movement	5
4 County with the highest population of enslaved people in New Jersey	Bergen County	2
5 In 1840, the percentage of enslaved Northerners who lived in New Jersey	85.7 percent (3,000 out of 3,500)	5
6 Why Canada was a safe haven	Canada was part of the British Empire, which abolished slavery in 1833	9
7 An operator in Delaware and New Jersey	Harriet Tubman was an operator or conductor on the Underground Railroad in these states	10
8 More than 250,000 copies were published	<i>The Slave's Friend</i> , an anti-slavery magazine for children	7
9 Law that created "slaves for a term"	1804 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery	9
10 The anti-slavery area of New Jersey; BONUS: The people there who stood against slavery	West/Quakers	2
11 A new name for "slave" starting in 1846	"Apprentices for life"	5
12 Nathaniel Seely's demand	Payment from the government for Amos, an enslaved person killed in the Revolutionary War	4
13 What dollars, shillings and guineas were all used for	Forms of currency used to pay rewards for the capture of escaped enslaved people	3
14 This order didn't free <u>all</u> enslaved people, but it allowed them to fight for freedom	The Emancipation Proclamation freed enslaved people only in the rebel states, and provided for the establishment of "Colored Troops"	6
15 Two ways Black people secured their own freedom	Sued in the courts; negotiated with owners for liberty; published petitions; wrote to congressional leaders; led the Underground Railroad; escaped to freedom	8-10

# RUNNING AWAY



RUNNING AWAY. (See page 345.)



# Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one of the projects below and explore how enslaved people and abolitionists worked to end slavery in New Jersey. Revisit “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit (pages 7–10) and conduct online research to help you gather information and ideas.

Quakers in New Jersey helped to pass laws supporting abolition (see p. 8 of the exhibit). Research one example of such a law. Summarize the law in your own words and present it in the style of the 18th or 19th century (i.e., make it look old).

*The Slave’s Friend* was a magazine that educated white children about why slavery was wrong (see p. 7 of the exhibit). Research the magazine. Then create an original piece for it about the evils of slavery. Use one of the following forms: a news item, story, poem or illustration with caption.

Choose one of the following illustrations from the exhibit: “Sold to Go South” (p. 8) or “Running Away” (p. 9). “Unfreeze” the scene and write a brief story in which you imagine what the people said and did, and what happened next.

New Jersey’s geography made it an important link on the Underground Railroad. Research “stations” in New Jersey and create a map showing possible routes to freedom passing through the state. Include labels and symbols showing how freedom seekers might have traveled and through which towns and cities they would have passed.

## FREE CHOICE

Create an item of your choosing that shows how enslaved and free Black people resisted and helped to abolish slavery.

The 1804 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery was a New Jersey law that ended slavery for some, but did so slowly, over more than 20 years (see p. 9 of the exhibit). Research the law. Pretend you are an abolitionist and write a short speech on why you are for or against the law.

Research an abolitionist who worked to end slavery in New Jersey (e.g., Harriet Tubman, Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld or Sarah Grimké from p. 10 of the exhibit). Design a monument to honor their work that includes a plaque describing their accomplishments.

Research a station on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey. Draw a diagram illustrating its secret hiding places or how it was used to shelter freedom seekers.

Create an artifact that represents one way in which enslaved people and abolitionists resisted the practice of slavery. Write a short description of what your artifact represents.

# SLAVERY BUILT AMERICA: HOW IMPLICATED WAS OUR REGION?



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How did New Jersey participate in and profit from chattel slavery? How did enslaved people and abolitionists resist and ultimately end slavery in New Jersey?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Investigate a museum exhibit on slavery in New Jersey.
- Identify economic, political, social and geographic factors related to chattel slavery in New Jersey.
- Explain how enslaved people and abolitionists resisted and brought an end to slavery in New Jersey.
- Research abolition in New Jersey, and create a work product reflecting what they have learned.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

90–135 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project images
- [Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History](#) (one copy per student or online access)
- *Five Dollars Reward* handout (one to project or one per student)
- *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey* handout (one per student)
- *Sold to Go South* handout (one to project)
- *Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition* handout (one per student)
- Laptops or tablets for student research



## VOCABULARY

13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	Emancipation	import/	resistance
abolition/	Proclamation	importation	servitude
abolitionist	enslaved	manumit/	slave codes
bondage	enslaver	manumission	Underground
chattel slavery	fugitive	plantation	Railroad
		Quaker	



# Procedures

## NOTES

In this lesson, students examine the exhibit, *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*. The middle school lesson on this topic engages students in a lower level investigation of the same exhibit. See that lesson if some of your students would benefit from it.

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

## PART I

### Introducing the *Slavery in New Jersey* Exhibit (20 minutes)

- 1 Project or distribute the handout *Five Dollars Reward* (from page 3 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit) and have students discuss the following questions in pairs:
  - Where and when do you think this ad might have been printed? What clues in the text lead to your conclusions?
  - What image do you have of the “negro boy” based on the description?
  - What do you think were the “perils” of “harboring” an enslaved person at this time?
  - How does it make you feel to read about a human being treated as chattel or property?
- 2 Reveal that the ad was placed in the *New Jersey Journal* in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, on October 20, 1812. Share that slavery was not legally abolished in New Jersey until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment became law in 1865, and that New Jersey was the last Northern state to ratify the amendment in 1866. Ask students if they are surprised that slavery existed in New Jersey for so long. Discuss why people might not associate the Northern states with slavery.

- 3 Tell students that the ad was featured in an exhibit called *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*,<sup>1</sup> which was on display at the Durand-Hedden House, a historic house museum in Maplewood, New Jersey. Tell students they will be exploring the exhibit (available in a booklet form) in class. Project the title page of the exhibit: <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>. Together read the author’s note on page i and the opening paragraph on page 2.
- 4 For homework, assign students to read pages 2–10 of the exhibit. Provide them with either a copy of the booklet or the URL if they are able to access it online. Distribute the handout *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey*, and review the instructions with students. Direct them to complete the handout as they read through the exhibit.

## PART II

### *Slavery in New Jersey—Digging Deeper* (20 minutes)

- 5 Have students take out (or access online) their homework and the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit. Seat them in small groups of 4–6 students and assign each group one of the following categories to focus on for this part of the lesson: economic, political, social or geographic.
- 6 Project the handout *Sold to Go South* (from page 8 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit). In their groups, have students discuss the details they notice and how the image reflects at least one economic, political, social or geographic factor related to slavery (focusing only on their assigned category). Students should reference their homework to support their observations. As a class, discuss their thoughts, which might include some of the following ideas:
  - **Economic:** Enslaved people were often kidnapped and sold South because it was profitable for enslavers.
  - **Political:** Changing laws and action by the courts against slavery motivated enslavers to sell their “property” out of fear that they might soon lose their legal right to ownership.

#### NOTE

If possible, enlarge pages 2–10 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit and post the pages around the room. Invite students to move around and view the posted panels as they work so the experience feels a bit more like being in a museum.

1 Safian, Gail R. “Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History.” Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association Inc. in consultation with South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. <https://www.durandhedden.org/docs/slavery-in-new-jersey-a-troubled-history.pdf>.

- Social: White enslavers wielded social and physical power over enslaved people; it was acceptable for them to sell enslaved people, beat them, and otherwise treat them as chattel or personal property.
- Geographic: The advent of railroads in 1829 made it easier to transport enslaved people across states.

**7** In their table groups, have students continue to discuss economic, political, social and geographic factors that sustained or led to the abolition of slavery in New Jersey. Remind them to focus on the category their group has been assigned, and to reference the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit and their homework as they share.

### PART III

#### Focus on the Forces of Abolition (45–90 minutes, depending on the independent projects chosen)

**8** Tell students they will work on an independent project focused on their assigned factor (economic, political, social or geographic) as it relates specifically to resistance by enslaved people and “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit. Post and review the following definitions:

- Abolition: The act of getting rid of something
- Abolitionist: A person taking action to eliminate slavery

**9** Distribute the *Choice Board* handout and go over the options with students. Allow them to choose one project to work on individually, with a partner or as a group. Provide students with access to laptops or tablets as well as other relevant materials, and give them time in class to complete their projects.

**10** When students are done, have them share and discuss their work in small groups that contain a mix of students who have completed different projects. Hang up work that is in a displayable form and allow students to briefly examine their classmates’ projects.

**11** As a class, debrief their experience delving into the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit using some of the discussion questions on the next page.

# Discussion Questions

1

Were you surprised to learn that chattel slavery existed and endured in New Jersey for almost 200 years? Why?

2

Why do you think the history of slavery in the North is often missing from our history books or lessons? What do you think these omissions tell us?

3

How has your understanding of slavery in our region changed?

4

Have any of your perceptions about slavery been challenged?

5

Which examples of resistance to slavery did you find most effective or inspiring?

6

What methods of resistance used by abolitionists do you think can be applied to problems in today's world?

7

What questions still remain for you about slavery in New Jersey?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + CamCo History. "Slave Ships on the Delaware: A Story of Camden, NJ." March 29, 2009. YouTube video, 7:23. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-juuB9SZr2A>.
- + Gigantino, James J. *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775–1865*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- + Harper, Douglas. "Slavery in New Jersey." 2003. <http://slavenorth.com/newjersey.htm>.
- + Hennelley, Robert. "Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey's DNA." *Salon*, July 29, 2015. [https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret\\_history\\_of\\_a\\_northern\\_slave\\_state\\_how\\_slavery\\_was\\_written\\_into\\_new\\_jerseys\\_dna](https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna).
- + NJTV News. "NJ Stops Along the Underground Railroad." February 16, 2015. YouTube video, 3:14. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_a9e4nWro68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_a9e4nWro68).
- + NJTV News. "Stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey." February 16, 2012. YouTube video, 3:06. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGAgpJUiWjE>.
- + NPR. "New Jersey Apologizes for Slavery." *Tell Me More*. January 8, 2008. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17925822>.
- + Princeton University. "The Princeton & Slavery Project." <https://slavery.princeton.edu>.
- + Rutgers University. "Slavery in New Jersey Lesson Plan." New Jersey Center for Civic Education. <http://civiced.rutgers.edu/files/nj/Slavery%20in%20NJ.docx>.
- + Switala, William J. *Underground Railroad in New Jersey and New York*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006.



## Five Dollars Reward

**FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.**  
 Ranaway from the subscriber, the 21st inst. a *NEGRO BOY* named *BOB*, aged 13 years, very black, had some dim letters printed on his arm, a little above the wrist, and had an iron strap round his neck;—he also had on when he went away, an old hat, tow trowsers, and a man's round jacket made of linsy woolsey. Whoever takes up said Negro boy, and secures him in any goal, or returns him to the subscriber, shall have the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid. All persons are forewarned harboring him at their peril.

**JOHN WOOD, JUN.**

Transcription:

**FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.**

Ranaway from the subscriber, the 21st inst. A NEGRO BOY named BOB, aged 13 years, very black, had some dim letters printed on his arm, a little above the wrist, and had an iron strap around his neck;—he also had on when he went away, an old hat, tow trousers, and a man's round jacket made of linsy woolsey. Whoever takes up said Negro boy, and secures him in any goal, or returns him to the subscriber, shall have the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid. All persons are forewarned harboring him at their peril.

JOHN WOOD, Jun.

NOTES:

Tow cloth was a coarse heavy linen used for clothing in the 18th century.

Linsy woolsey was a coarse fabric woven from linen or cotton and a wool filling.



# NOTES: SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Read pages 2–10 of the exhibit about the history of slavery in New Jersey. As you read, consider the economic, political, social and geographic factors that sustained slavery or led to the abolition of slavery. For each section, write notes on the chart in at least two columns.

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>ECONOMIC</b> <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	<b>POLITICAL</b> <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	<b>GEOGRAPHIC</b> <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
Page 2: <i>How It All Started</i>				
Page 3: <i>The Growth of Slavery in NJ</i>				

## NOTES: SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY (CONTINUED)



SECTION	<b>ECONOMIC</b> <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	<b>POLITICAL</b> <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	<b>GEOGRAPHIC</b> <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
Page 4: <i>The Revolutionary War</i>				
Page 5: <i>Slavery in NJ Declined</i>				
Page 6: <i>The Civil War</i>				
Pages 7–10: <i>The Forces of Abolition</i>				

# SOLD TO GO SOUTH



*From an old print*

SOLD TO GO SOUTH





# Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one of the projects below under your assigned category and explore how enslaved people and abolitionists worked to end slavery in New Jersey. Revisit “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit (pages 7–10) and conduct online research to help you gather information and ideas.

<b>ECONOMIC</b> <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	<b>POLITICAL</b> <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	<b>GEOGRAPHIC</b> <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
<p>Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two ECONOMIC incentives. The flier should include your group’s name, ideas and an illustration.</p>	<p>Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two POLITICAL incentives. The flier should include your group’s name, ideas and an illustration.</p>	<p>Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two SOCIAL incentives. The flier should include your group’s name, ideas and an illustration.</p>	<p>Research NJ ports and towns that were centers for the importation of enslaved people. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier advertising an upcoming abolition meeting in one of those cities or towns. The flier should include your group’s name, at least three facts about the importation of enslaved people and an illustration.</p>
<p>One way enslaved people resisted slavery was to sabotage work and limit profits (e.g. by breaking tools or faking sickness). Research ways enslaved people disrupted economic activity and create a storyboard with at least three illustrated panels that tells this story.</p>	<p>Black Americans published many petitions and wrote letters to Congress making the case for abolition. Draft your own petition or letter in which you present at least three reasons why NJ should abolish slavery.</p>	<p>Research abolitionists Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, who ran the Eagleswood school, which was in a community that may have been a stop on the Underground Railroad (see p. 10 of the exhibit). Design a monument to honor their work that includes a plaque describing their accomplishments.</p>	<p>NJ’s geography made it an important link on the Underground Railroad. Research “stations” in New Jersey and create a map showing possible routes to freedom passing through the state. Include labels and symbols showing how freedom seekers might have traveled and through which towns and cities they may have passed.</p>
<p>Many enslaved people ran away, winning their freedom and hurting their enslavers economically. Choose one of the reward notices on p. 3 of the exhibit. Imagine the enslaved person in the ad made it to freedom in Canada. Write an article for a local newspaper there describing their journey.</p>	<p>Research anti-slavery laws in NJ resulting from Quaker activism and the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (SPAS) (see p. 8 of the exhibit). Create a short speech for the next SPAS meeting that celebrates the passage of one of these laws and describes its requirements.</p>	<p>Black churches played an active role in abolition and the Underground Railroad. Research a NJ church and prepare a brief slide presentation that educates your classmates about its anti-slavery work. Examples include the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church near Swedesboro, Bethel A.M.E. Church in Greenwich Township and First Presbyterian Church in Newark.</p>	<p>In 1838, Jacob Brown, a freed enslaved person, bought eight acres of land in Fair Haven, NJ. He subdivided the land and sold pieces to his friends and family. Research Brown and create a design of the new neighborhood. Include a school, church, farms, shops and homes, and labels that describe how the residents used the land to create a free and independent existence for themselves.</p>