

Lesson 2: Slavery (2 Days)

□ Getting Started

For generations in America, it was legal for one human being to own another human being as legal property. In this lesson, you'll learn about the history of slavery in America, the hardships of daily life as a slave, and the ways in which enslaved people resisted slavery and overcame some of its tragic circumstances. You'll learn about these topics through both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are created at the time a historical event takes place or are produced by people who remember the event. Newspaper accounts, photographs, artwork, maps, diary entries, letters, objects from the past, and interviews with people who remember the past are all primary sources. **Secondary sources** are created after a historical event takes place. For example, if an author writes a book about the past (such as the book that you are using in this unit), that would be a secondary source. Secondary sources often draw on primary sources for information but then summarize, analyze, or add commentary to help the reader better understand the information. When learning about the past, you may find both kinds of sources helpful.

Note that your readings for this lesson are incorporated into the activities for each day.

Stuff You Need

- ✓ *A History of US Volume 6: War, Terrible War 1855-1865* by Joy Hakim
- ✓ construction paper* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ hole punch* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- ✓ plain white paper* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- ✓ roll of paper or a roll of wrapping paper with white on one side* (Activity 3 - Option 2)
- ✓ ruler* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- ✓ scissors* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- ✓ yarn* (Activity 3 - Option 1)

Ideas to Think About

- What consequences can arise when the power over other human beings is tragically abused?

- How can those with relatively little power stand up to those with great power?

Things to Know

- Two main kinds of resources can tell us about the past: primary sources and secondary sources.
- **Primary sources** are created at the time a historical event takes place or are produced by people who remember the event. Newspaper accounts, photographs, artwork, maps, diary entries, letters, objects from the past, and interviews with people who remember the past are all primary sources.
- **Secondary sources** are created after a historical event takes place. For example, if an author writes a book about the past, that would be a secondary source.

Activities

Activity 1: Understanding Slavery

Before you begin the reading for this activity, list some things that you already know about slavery in America in the K (Already Know) column of the "KWL Chart" page. Next, record what you would like to know about slavery in America that you don't already know in the W (Want to Know) column.

Next, look over the categories on the following 3 activity pages. As you watch the video and do the readings for this activity, record important information you find. You don't have to record your notes in complete sentences — just write down important details for each category of information. You will continue filling out the pages on Day 2 of this lesson.

Plantation Life

www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/9095/

First, watch this video about what life on a plantation was like for slaves.

Next, read the following in *A History of US: War, Terrible War 1855-1865*:

- **Chapter 4** (pp. 27-33): This chapter talks about the life of Harriet Tubman, a slave who ran away to the North and then helped hundreds of other slaves escape slavery as well.
- **Chapter 9** (pp. 48-53): This chapter covers some laws that made slaves' lives even more challenging.

Day 2

Activity 2: Reading First-Hand Accounts of Slavery

During the 1930s, the federal government began a project called the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that employed millions of people to carry out projects for the public good. One of the many projects that the WPA started was a project to interview former slaves about their lives during slavery.

The thousands of interviewees for this project were elderly, of course, and some people recalled only what their parents had told them about slavery, but their recollections have provided historians with an incredibly rich primary source for understanding slavery from the point of view of enslaved people.

As you read these narratives, you'll notice that there are many words that are spelled in unexpected ways, and the language in some of the narratives is different from what you might expect to read in a history book. The interviewers for these narratives were told to write down the language as they heard it in order to preserve not just what people said but how they said it. Some writers, however, may have written things down incorrectly, or their writing may have been influenced by stereotypes or prejudices. Some of the language in these narratives may be easier to understand if you read the narratives aloud so that you can hear the words and not just see them on the page. Below are some words from these historical sources that may be unclear to readers today:

- de – the
- dey – they
- wid – with
- dat – that
- den – then
- purty – pretty
- dis – this

- gits — gets
- wuz — was
- atter — after
- uv — of
- whut — what

As you read, continue adding to your activity pages about slavery from Day 1. Also consider how reading about the past from a primary source is different from reading about the past from a secondary source.

Growing Up in Slavery
www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/9087/
Fannie Moore, 88 years old, was a slave on a plantation in South Carolina

Charley Williams (LA)
Charley Williams, 94 years old, was a slave on a plantation in Louisiana but lived in Oklahoma at the time of the interview.
<i>Source: WPA Slave Narrative Project, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 13, Federal Writer's Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA); Manuscript Division, Library of Congress</i>
"When de day begin to crack de whole plantation break out wid all kinds of noises, and you could tell what going on by de kind of noise you hear. Come de daybreak you hear de guinea fowls start potracking down at de edge of de woods lot, and den de roosters all start up 'round de barn and de ducks finally wake up and jine in. You can smell de sow belly frying down at the cabins in de "row", to go wid de hoecake and buttermilk. Den purty soon de wind rise a little, and you can hear a old bell donging way on some plantation a mile or two off, and den more bells at other places and maybe a horn, and purty soon yonder go old Master's ram horn wid a long toot and den some short toots, and here come de overseer down de row of cabins, hollering right and left and picking de ham out'n his teeth wid a long shiny goose quill pick. Bells and horns! Bells for dis and horns for dat! All we knowed was go and come by de bells and horn. Old ram horn blow to send us all to de field. We all line up, about seventy-five field [slaves], and go by de tool shed and gir out hoes, or maybe go hitch up de mules to de plows and lay de plows out on de side so de overseer can see iffen de points is [sharp.] Any plow gits broke or de point gits bungled up on de rocks it goes to do blacksmith...den we all git on down in de field."

John W. Fields (KY)

John W. Fields, 89 years old, was a slave in Kentucky but lived in Indiana at the time of the interview.

Source: WPA Slave Narrative Project, Indiana Narratives, Volume 5, Federal Writer's Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA); Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

"There were 11 other children besides myself in my family. When I was six years old, all of us children were taken from my parents, because my master died and his estate had to be settled. We slaves were divided by this method. Three disinterested persons were chosen to come to the plantation and together they wrote the names of the different heirs on a few slips of paper. These slips were put in a hat and passed among us slaves. Each one took a slip and the name on the slip was the new owner. I happened to draw the name of a relative of my master who was a widow. I can't describe the heartbreak and horror of that separation. I was only six years old and it was the last time I ever saw my mother for longer than one night. Twelve children taken from my mother in one day....My mother was allowed to visit among us children for one week of each year, so she could only remain a short time at each place...

...My life prior to that time was filled with heart-aches and despair. We arose from four to five o'clock in the morning and parents and children were given hard work, lasting until nightfall gave us our respite. After a meager supper, we generally talked until we grew sleepy, we had to go to bed. Some of us would read, if we were lucky enough to know how.

In most of us colored folks was the great desire to be able to read and write. We took advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves. The greater part of the plantation owners were very harsh if we were caught trying to learn or write. It was the law that if a white man was caught trying to educate a negro slave, he was liable to prosecution entailing a fine of fifty dollars and a jail sentence. We were never allowed to go to town and it was not until after I ran away that I knew that they sold anything but slaves, tobacco and whiskey. Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us. We knew we could run away, but what then? An offender of this crime was subjected to very harsh punishment."

Joe High (NC)
Joe High, 80 years old, from North Carolina
<i>Source: WPA Slave Narrative Project, North Carolina Narratives, Volume 11, Part 1, Federal Writer's Project, United States Work Projects Administration (USWPA); Manuscript Division, Library of Congress</i>
<p>"My work in slavery times wuz ridin' behin' my Missus, Clara Griffin, who wuz my old missus' sister's daughter. She came to be our missus. When she went visiting I rode behind her. I also looked atter de garden, kept chickens out uv de garden, and minded de table, fanned flies off de table. They were good to us. Dey whupped us sometime. I wuz not old enough to do no fiel' work...</p> <p>We had very good places to sleep and plenty to eat. I got plenty uv potlicker, peas, and pumpkins. All us little [children] e't out uv one bowl. We used mussel shells, got on the branch, for spoons. Dey must not er had no spoons or sumpin. The pea fowls roosted on de great house every night...</p> <p>...I wore wooden bottom shoes and I wore only a shirt. I went in my shirt tail until I wuz a great big boy, many years atter slavery. There were 50 or more slaves on the plantation. Old women wove cloth on looms. We made syrup, cane syrup, with a cane mill. We carried our corn to Foster's Mill down on Little River to have it ground. It was called Little River den; I don't know whut it is called in dis day.</p> <p>There wuz a block in de yard where missus got up on her horse. There were two steps to it. Slaves were sold from this block. I 'member seein' them sold from this block...</p> <p>...Dey did not teach us anything about books, dey did not teach us anything about readin' and writin'...</p> <p>...We played the games uv marbles, blind fold, jumpin' and racin', and jumpin' the rope."</p>

Activity 3: Quilt Squares Project

A quilt brings together different pieces of fabric to create designs that, together, make an intricate whole. Some quilts include images that tell stories, and some quilters choose specific images and colors to represent ideas that are important to them.

For this activity, you will either create a quilt about slavery or a mural depicting the life of a slave child. Ask your parent which option to complete.

Option 1

Create your own quilt about American slavery using the "Slavery Quilt" activity page.

Option 2

Use roll paper to make a mural depicting the day in the life of a slave child about your age. (You can even use the blank side of wrapping paper on the roll if the blank side is white.) Begin with the child waking up in his cabin with his family and be sure to illustrate important parts of his day — mealtimes, work, time with family. You may choose to show a scene that the child might have witnessed if someone he knew was punished or sold. Your mural should end with the child going to bed at the end of the day.

Wrapping Up

Day-to-day life was difficult for slaves. Field work was brutal, and living conditions were often very poor. Some slaves, like John Fields, faced separation from their families even at a very young age. Slaves could be beaten if they disobeyed the slave owner's rules. Still, enslaved people managed to overcome some of the hardships of slavery. Some escaped. Others found ways of helping one another and resisting the worst cruelties of slavery. And slaves kept hope for a better future alive by creating a strong and supportive community in the slave quarters and by refusing to give up on the dream of freedom.

To finish up this lesson, write some notes in the last column of your KWL chart from Activity 1 to reflect on what you learned about slavery over the last couple of days.

KWL Chart

K Already Know	W Want to Know	L What you Learned

Homes



Education



Food



Names, Marriage & Families



Sale of Slaves



Resistance, Runaways & Aid

Work



Freedom



Slavery Quilt

Today you will make a paper quilt depicting what you think are some of the most important things for people to know about American slavery. You will need:

Cut out nine 5" squares from white paper and nine 6" squares from construction paper. Be thoughtful in selecting your colors – slavery is a serious topic, so you may want to select colors that will reflect that seriousness.

- white paper
- construction paper
- hole puncher
- scissors
- ruler
- glue
- yarn

Look back at your notes from Activity 1. Choose five details or ideas that you think are important from your notes and list them below. Then, on five of your white squares of paper, illustrate those five ideas.

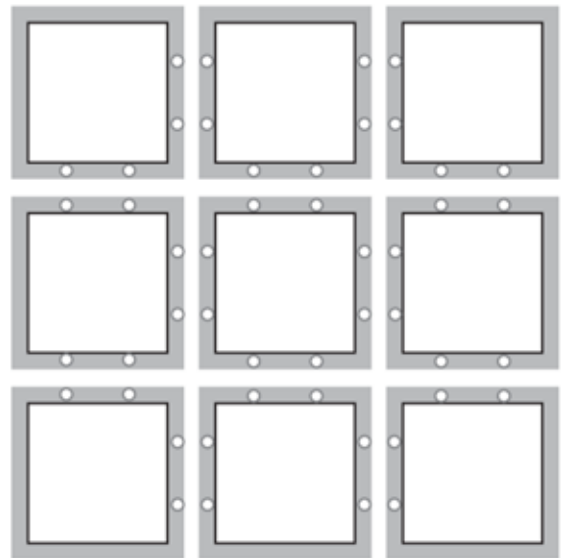
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Next, choose three events that were described in the slave narratives that you read today. Use three more squares of white paper to illustrate those three events.

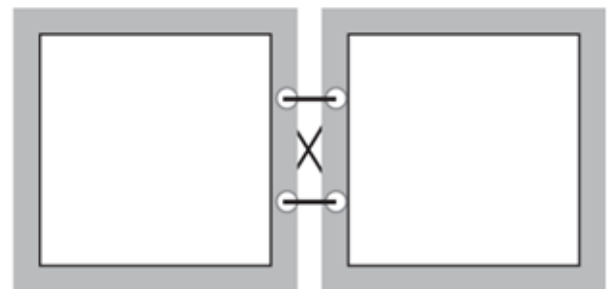
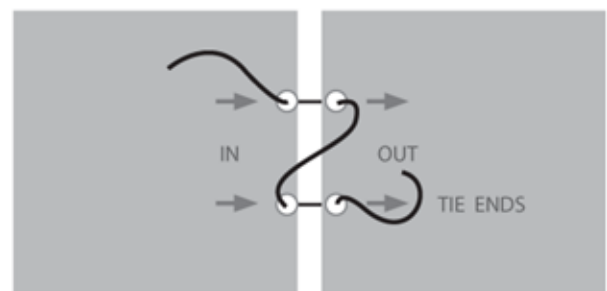
Finally, use your ninth square to create an image that sums up your thoughts about American slavery. This square can use words as well as pictures to send your message.

Mount each white square to the center of a construction paper square. Lay out your squares in three rows of three squares each, deciding which squares should go together, where your ninth square should go to have the greatest impact, and how you want your finished quilt to look.

Once you have finalized your layout, use your hole punch to punch two holes in the construction paper border anywhere that two squares meet. (This means that your center square will have two holes on each edge.) Use yarn to tie the holes together so that your quilt will stay together and can be posted for display.



BACK



FRONT

Lesson 2: Slavery (2 Days)

Getting Started

? Big Ideas

- What consequences can arise when the power over other human beings is tragically abused?
- How can those with relatively little power stand up to those with great power?



Facts and Definitions

- Two main kinds of resources can tell us about the past: primary sources and secondary sources.
- **Primary sources** are created at the time a historical event takes place or are produced by people who remember the event. Newspaper accounts, photographs, artwork, maps, diary entries, letters, objects from the past, and interviews with people who remember the past are all primary sources.
- **Secondary sources** are created after a historical event takes place. For example, if an author writes a book about the past, that would be a secondary source.

⦿ Skills

- Describe the causes and effects of the Civil War. (SS)
- Identify different points of view about an issue or topic. (SS)
- Identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced the participants in an event. (SS)
- Use primary and secondary sources to discover information about United States history. (SS)
- Describe the development of the agrarian economy in the South and discuss the significance of cotton and the cotton gin. (SS)
- Trace the origins and development of slavery; its effects on African Americans and on the region's political, economic, and cultural development; and identify the strategies that were tried to both overturn it and preserve it. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will learn about slavery from both secondary sources (books written in recent years about the past) and primary sources (first-hand accounts of slavery). Begin the lesson by asking your child to recall what she has learned about the significant differences between the North and the South prior to the Civil War. Review the role of slavery in the system of plantation agriculture that formed the foundation of the Southern economy. Let your child know that, in this lesson, she will learn more about slavery, focusing in particular on the perspective of people who were enslaved.

Be advised that the Hakim book includes a very brief mention, on page 49, of the sexual abuse of slaves, so you will want to be prepared to answer your child's possible questions about that difficult topic. Also, the video and Hakim book include drawings and photographs that some children may find upsetting. You may wish to preview the material beforehand.

Also note that you will need to be available to read first-hand accounts of slavery (Activity 2) with your child. These narratives are often challenging to read and will require explanation of their context and some of the language and dialect used in them.

Activities

Activity 1: Understanding Slavery

On Day 1, your child will first complete the first two columns of the "KWL Chart" (What do I know? and What do I want to know?) and then watch a video about plantation life and read about slavery in *A History of US: War, Terrible War 1855-1865*.

As your child watches the video/reads, she will take notes on a series of topics using the activity pages provided. Reading texts for specific information, organizing that information into categories, and taking notes that will allow for synthesis and analysis later on are all important academic skills; it might be helpful to check in with your child during this process. Your child will continue taking notes in Activity 2 and then use the information she gathered for the project in Activity 3.

Optional: Slavery and the Making of America

www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/9092/

This companion website to a PBS documentary series has several sections that your child may find helpful, especially if she would like to delve deeper into any of the topics mentioned on the activity pages. In the Explore by Subject drop-down list, choose a category such as The Family, Living Conditions, Responses to Enslavement, and Freedom & Emancipation. Then click the link in the Get the Historical Overview section to learn more about the topic.

Day 2

Activity 2: Reading First-Hand Accounts of Slavery

For Activity 2, your child will read excerpts from interviews with former slaves that were recorded by the federal government's Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Your child may find these narratives challenging to read because they are mostly written in dialect. A list of words that may be unclear has been included to help your child work through these sources, but she may need some parental guidance as well. These narratives also deal with hardships like children sold away from their parents, so be prepared to read these narratives with your child and be available to talk about the troubling aspects of the stories and to answer your child's questions through further research together.

Born in Slavery

www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/8716/

If you decide to further explore first-hand accounts of slavery with your child, the collection *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938* from the Library of Congress's American Memory Project provides access to hundreds of transcripts of conversations with former slaves. Be sure to preview any narrative that you might want to share with your child, however, since many of the narratives describe sexual abuse, severe brutality, or other topics that may be inappropriate for your child. Many also use language that is, today, considered offensive. You will want to read over the essays associated with the collection yourself beforehand and talk with your child about these interviews before sharing them with her.

Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives

www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/9093/

Your child may also benefit from watching all or part of this video, in which well-known African-American actors read some of the WPA slave narratives aloud. Some content may be inappropriate for this age group, so be sure to preview the video before sharing it with your child.

Activity 3: Quilt Squares Project

For Activity Three, your child will be demonstrating her understanding of American slavery through a visual project, either a quilt that draws on experiences related in the readings or a mural depicting the daily life of an enslaved child roughly her own age. Please choose the assignment that you think will be most engaging for your child.

Option 1

Option 1, the quilt project, will require the creation of nine different images and some assembly and may be time consuming. It will require your child to analyze the readings to determine the images that she most wants to include.

Option 2

Option 2, the mural, will require only one large art project, but it will require the child to synthesize the readings to be able to tell the story of a full day in the life of a child living under slavery in a visual way.

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- What was life like for slaves before the Civil War? (Your child's answers may vary, but she may discuss the hardships of the Middle Passage, the living conditions slaves faced, the possibility of families being torn apart by sale, punishments that slaves could be given, laws prohibiting education for slaves, the hard work that slaves performed, and the ways in which enslaved people built a community and helped one another.)
- How was it different reading the secondary source materials compared to reading the slave narratives? (Answers will vary.)

Things to Review

Spend significant time talking with your child about the quilt or mural that she created. Ask her why she chose those particular images and scenes. If she made a quilt, ask her how she decided to organize the squares and what she learned about slavery by putting all of these ideas together into one visual project. Also encourage her to complete the last column of her KWL chart from Activity 1 to allow her to reflect on what she has learned about slavery in this lesson.

Special Notes

You may find that your child has a number of questions about slavery. Taking the time to do further research with her and discovering the answers to her questions will help her more fully understand this tragic and challenging topic in American history.