

The Life of a Slave: “I’ve Been ’Buked an’ I’ve Been Scorned”

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I’ve been ’buked an’ I’ve been scorned
I’ve been ’buked an’ I’ve been scorned children;
I’ve been ’buked an’ I’ve been scorned
I’ve been talked about sho’s you’ born
- arranged by Carl Haywood, *Traditional Negro Spiritual*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The old Negro Spiritual above talks about the pain and suffering slaves had to endure during slavery. For over four centuries, the African slave traders transported over 13 million Africans from their home countries to Europe and the Americas. During the years between 1440 and the 1870s slave ships crowded the ocean and seas. African people were chained after being captured and loaded into the ships, never again seeing their families and loved ones. The unwilling and unfree passengers—men, women and children—were stolen from their homes. After a period of imprisonment, they packed the slaves underneath the ships, in cramped spaces between 4 feet to 4 1/2 feet in height . . . a few of them threw themselves into the seas to avoid the uncertainty that lay ahead of them.

The sick and the weak were thrown overboard by the captain when their food supplies ran low. It was estimated that 20% of the ships’ human cargo would not survive the trip across the ocean that took over 280 days.

The slave trade was well established in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South and Central America as well as the West Indies. In August 1619, a Dutch ship left the African coast with twenty-three slaves including women and children and later docked in Jamestown, Virginia. They were converted to Christianity and they became indentured servants, a practice against which Europeans had begun to rebel. The first proposed servants, Native Americans, had calmly resisted and refused to do comply.

By the 1660s, Africans in the American colonies were fully enslaved. Some of them were adolescents, but the majority of the enslaved were young male adults. Slavery was more economical than indentured servitude in the large-scale production of tobacco, cotton, rice, and sugar cane. The slaves served for their entire life, whereas the indentured servant would work for a specified time, usually four to seven years. At the end of a servant’s work period, the master had to give them their freedom plus a small plot of land and any money owed and clothes. By keeping slaves the plantation owners avoided this expense. At the end of the 1700s slaves could be found in all thirteen

colonies and laws were passed to legalize making slaves pieces of property. As a side note, according to Robert Liston in *The History of Slavery*, Africans also practiced slavery. A few slaves were caught in the aftermath of war or some were offered into slavery as payment of a debt.

TEACHING THIS UNIT

This unit will bring awareness about what it was like to be an adolescent slave. I teach middle school and I think this is needed in order for the students to see the difference between a life of slavery and the life they live today. Many students today take things for granted, meaning they really do not appreciate history or what people have done for them. We will look at the slave's typical day, the possessions they owned—if any—and their leisure time. The students will compare this to their life today.

The students will research slave stories and narratives and do a comparison of their lives with the slaves. Students will create their own dramatic interpretations and perform them in the class. Students will begin with the kidnapping and selling of slaves captured in Africa as well as study what the Middle Passage was. This will further expose the horrors that took place on the ships. Students will learn what it was like to be put on a ship in a small cramped space in chains and having no one to speak to in their own language. Beginning with the time they get up for school and until they go to bed at night, students will write a journal of a typical day for them and see what a typical day for a slave was like. The students will write a paper on where they chose to work, in the field, in the big house or be a hired help for someone else. In addition, the students will research and debate the legalities of slavery. At the end of this unit, the students will write poems and essays expressing their views on slavery.

Students will look at the autobiographies and biographies of Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacob, William Byrd, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and the slave narratives, especially the ones from Texas to see what life was like here. Other sources of information include: *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* by Lorena S Walsh; *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War* by Jeffrey R. Hummel, *The Afro-American Texans* by the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, *The Underground Railroad: Dramatic Firsthand Accounts of Daring Escapes to Freedom* by Charles L. Blockson and *A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee* by Patricia C. Mc Kissack and more.

The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.
The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.
Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.

(Langston Hughes, *My People*)

The Origin of Slavery

Slavery had been practiced for many years before the Africans were brought to the Americas. In my introduction, I briefly stated that indentured servitude was common throughout early Colonial U.S. history. In exchange for a free ride across the Atlantic, and a chance for a better life afterward, the indentured servants agreed to work for someone up to 7 years. After the importation of slaves in 1619, planters soon learned of the Africans' skillful knowledge in farming. Sometime during the 1670s the Europeans began to diminish and were unwilling to sign-on as indentured servants. "They came from a pool of migrants who had searched for work in various English settings at times of poor wages and unpromising economic opportunities at home" (Morgan 14). Therefore, the Europeans begin to look at other groups, the natives who lived in the colonies, the convicts, the vagrants, and the Africans.

Consequently, an increasing number of slaves were kidnapped and sold by other Africans and brought to the Americas. They were to replace the Native American slaves and indentured servants who were not suitable for the harsh conditions, because they were easily infected with the diseases the Europeans brought with them, and some just refused to be enslaved and did not conform to being enslaved. They saw the Native Americans as noble savages, who remained "ignorant" only because they never were exposed to the blessings and benefits of the English culture. Replacing the indentured servants was no problem. English men and women, mostly between their teens and mid-twenties, provided a large workforce until the idea of having chattel slaves arose. The terms and conditions of indentured servitude were usually set out in a legally binding contract. The indentured servant knew that the contract could be sold, bartered, given away, or even gambled away by the master or mistress. However, many laws were enacted to protect the indentured servants in ways that the slaves never would be, because slaves were deemed essentially property.

Between 1718 and 1775, some 50,000 convicts were shipped to the American Colonies from the British Isles. Why did this occur? In an attempt to rid Britain of the crime wave that hit London after the end of the Spanish Succession in 1713, they exiled their convicts to North America, according to Kenneth Morgan of *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America*. The European Convicts and vagrants could be forced into servitude for a short period, usually seven to fourteen years at the most. After serving their time, they could buy their freedom, stay in the country, and buy land.

When the Europeans arrived in Africa, they thought that the citizens of that part of the world were uncivilized. They begin to form many negative views of the African, the idea of associating the word "black" as being evil, scary, and mysterious. In the book *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies* by Betty Wood, she described the African as being "beastly Lyvynges." Seeing the West Africans as wild, barbarous people who bore a similarity to animals, such accounts caused serious discussion about the humanity of the African people from the Europeans. Not knowing

that Christianity was a powerful force already in Africa, the Europeans quickly made laws to keep Africans captured and enslaved. Even so, the Virginia General Assembly declaration of 1705 stated that, “All servants imported and brought into the Country... who were not Christians in their native Country, shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction; the master shall be free of all punishment, as if such accident never happened. The wealthy landowners, to serve as a model for the remaining colonies, enacted these laws.

The enslavement of Africans began in the Caribbean, not the American Colonies. The Dutch, who ran a slave trade from their island of St. Eustatius, were in a position to offer the planters on the island of St. Kitt alternative free labor (they were unable to secure the labor they needed from the Old World).

Later in 1625, Captain John Powell, for England, claimed the island of Barbados. The native people who had once inhabited the island were extinct. After learning about the status and treatment of West Africans in Brazil and other countries in South America, the English Caribbean had justified their action of enslaving the West African for economic reasons. They became the most profitable form of labor currently available. The planters believed that the West African could be fed and clothed more cheaply than indentured servants could, and who retained some degree of bargaining power. The Europeans could extract more from the African on an hourly, daily, weekly, and yearly basis than they could from the indentured servant or Native American. The prices that the planters were receiving from the sugar were such that, if they chose, they could afford to work the Africans to death and replenish them when they needed to. The land of Barbados was small and expensive and seemed to offer few opportunities for indentured servants at the end of their working term. These economic circumstances helped to justify the planters turning to enslaved African workers.

Barbadian planters who thought of moving to the Low country of Carolina were being guaranteed the continuance of the right they already had, clamoring for them to hold a particular form of property: and that was to enslave West Africans.

Political theorist John Locke was able to justify the institution of slavery by arguing that it lay outside the realm of the social contract. (Slavery, he argued, resembled warfare in that it involved the opposing forces of slave and master.) Therefore, the origin of slavery has its origins mainly in economic reasoning.

We are an African people
Hard-softness burning black.
The earth's magic colors our veins.
An African people are we;
Burning blacker softly, softer.

(Don L. Lee, *From African Poems*)

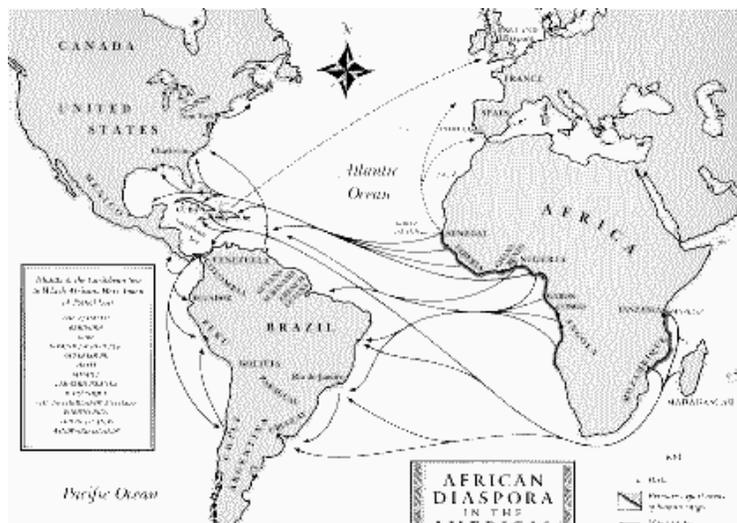
Capture

We often wonder how slaves were captured. According to Olaudah Equiano, slaves were taken several ways: The first way was to, “commit a crime that was so outraged like kidnapping or adultery. Your capturer can then sell you into slavery” (60). Secondly, you could become a slave by a being a prisoner of war. He mentions tribal wars in the fifth chapter of his book. This was a form of punishment for those captured during tribal wars. And lastly he spoke of being kidnapped; he and his sister were kidnapped while home alone.

The slaves aboard the *Amistad* said, “They were captured because of being bridled with gold and then lured onto the ship. They were also kidnapped from their villages and, by following the crew of the *Amistad*, were thinking they were going to a better place. No matter how they were captured, it was inhuman and brutal. Just imagine being outside of your home playing with your sister and someone takes you away from your family and never seeing them again. “More than two-fifths of the antebellum slaves were young as age fifteen; one-third were younger than age ten” (Schwartz 5). Each time a child was born in slavery, the system began all over again.

The Middle Passage

One of the most difficult parts of being a slave was to be captured and thrown on a ship, chained leg-to-leg, and arm-to-arm. The Middle Passage is described as the voyage that carried the Africans from their homeland into slavery across the Atlantic Ocean.



The above picture illustrating the slave trade route can be found on the website, *Juneteenth—The Middle Passage* (see bibliography).

Oluadah Equiano described his ordeal as almost suffocating; he stated that, “the stench of the hold was so intolerably loathsome” (Gates 60). They were packed into the ship as cargo. They had to lie there or sit in their own waste and vomit. Some eventually suffocated because of the smell.

Robert Liston, the author of *Slavery in America*, wrote that, “The ship had only enough room to turn to lay there on their sides. Nor, did they have enough height to stand” (35-36).

Cugoano describes his journey as being, “betrayed by one of his own country women” (Fisher). He spoke of “the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and groans and cries of our fellow men” while on board the ship” (Fisher). In the bibliography, I have listed several web sites with good information on this horrendous journey.

The Arrival

After surviving the long journey across the Atlantic, the slaves were first quarantined and then herded into the auction pens as chattel to be sold. They were stripped of their clothing; skin greased down to make the appearance of being healthy. Liston refers to the old slaves having their hair dyed black and their silver whiskers plucked out to make them appear younger. They were examined from head to toe for any deformities and then would be sold at a price.

Reasons for Slavery

There are many reasons why slavery was in force here in North America after the indentured servants did not work out. First, Europeans tried to enslave the Native American Indians, with little success. Liston again stated, “They were highly susceptible to the illness of the Europeans. They died by the thousands” (26).

On the other hand, the Africans were clearly stronger and used to the hot typical climate of the south. The reasons were purely economic. Remember, some considered the Africans as savage, non-Christian and easily identifiable, but they showed the slave owner how to cultivate their own crops. The South Carolina rice fields, the Virginia tobacco fields and many more crops were all cultivated by these slaves who came with great farming skills.

According to Betty Wood, the author of *The Origins of American Slavery*, many Europeans believed that Africans were the descendants of Ham. (Ham sinned against his father, Noah, and as a punishment, he was turned black.) The English could therefore conclude that slavery had originated as a divine punishment for sinful behavior. They also regarded the physical characteristics as, “Beastly Lyvynges . . . having low and flat nostrils and being libidinous as apes making them wild, barbarous people.” How incorrect they were.

Oh, child! Thou art a little slave
And all of thee that grows,
Will be another's weight of flesh,
But thine the weight of woes
Thou art a little slave, my
And much I grieve and mourn
That to so dark a destiny
My lovely babe I've borne.

(Anonymous, *The Slave Mother's Address to her Infant Child*)

The Slave Adolescent

You probably wonder what life for a slave adolescent was like and what they did. They had no life as the adolescents do today; most adolescent slaves had specific jobs to do. One slave in particular, Jeff Calhoun, who wrote of his life in a Narrative and at one time lived in Houston, stated that, "as soon as I got up big enough to handle horses, I was made a carriage driver for the family that owned me" (Fisher). Jeff had moved from Alabama to Texas with his owners. For most of the workers, the horn would blow early. They had to eat breakfast, do their other chores, and be in the fields by five in the morning.

According to Marie Jenkins Schwartz, author of *Born in Bondage*, "many slave children throughout the South found their earliest introduction to agricultural labor as human scarecrows" (145) and were sent to the fields to keep birds from demolishing grain crops intended for market or for home consumption. No matter what task they were assigned, the slave adolescent had to do the job.

A Typical Day

A typical day was working for the master who owned you. There was no time for playing games. You were his property, and you did what he said to do. The adolescent child was expected to put in a full day's work along with the others for their master. Sunday for some was a day off from work. Slaves could be hired out when they reached a certain age. When Frederick Douglass was sixteen, he was hired to work for a Mr. Covey, who had a reputation for being a first hand overseer and Negro-breaker. He and Frederick were in a broil for nearly two hours one day, when Frederick succeeded at not letting Mr. Covey whip him again. That last battle was a turning point in Frederick's life; it rekindled his yearning for freedom.

Slavery forced children to "grow up" fast and perform "adult" jobs. Wilma King wrote that young slaves, at Monticello and elsewhere, toiled at specific chores, in labor gangs, and under the task system. Individual chores were most common in personal services, domestic work, skilled crafts, and industrial production.

OH! Massa what make you so cruel to me?
Why slave me? Me fadder and mudder was free!
Why'tave me? Why cute de kin off my back?
Why cuss me? Because, you d-u'd rascal, you're black.

(Anonymous, "The Planter's Reason for His Cruelty to His Brethren;" *Baltimore Weekly Magazine* 1800)

Possessions

Possessions were very few for the slaves. Jeff Calhoun, writer of one of the Slave Narratives wrote that, "we never wore any shoes in the summer, and several winters we never had any shoes to wear" (Fisher). Most slaves were given a shirt and a pair of pants and if they were lucky they had a good shirt and pants to wear on Sundays and holidays. William Byrd, another narrative writer wrote that, "he never had shoes, but we wrapped our feet in fur hides." Those who did get shoes got a pair of ill-fitted brogans.

Our Black People are your and my People
We Know they can love let this be true
For Me and All of you.

(Kali Grosvenor, *Our Black People*)

Leisure Time

Leisure time, if any, was rare between the Fourth of July and Christmas for some. Jeff Calhoun said, "They got three days for Christmas and a half-day for Thanksgiving. New Years Day was just another day for his master, because the master believed if they didn't put in a full days work, he would go broke" (Rawick 603). They didn't play games like we do, they played fox and hound and hide and seek. When working they sang songs like, "Whos been here while I wuz gone." On special occasions the master would let them go swimming in the creek. According to Frederick Douglass, the days between (six days) Christmas and New Year's Day were allowed as holidays: they could go and visit family members. This time was generally allowed for them to do with as they please. One of the most unusual things for William Byrd was his master had a man to teach them how to read and write. Slaves, including the children were old enough, had to work for dawn to dusk. Their shacks were used only for sleeping and eating when possible.

William Henry Singleton reported that some plantation owners actually created and encouraged moments of relaxation and recreation (Rawick 608). The purpose was for achieving a social or financial need. Some masters would occasionally have parties at the plantation, to which they would invite slaves from other plantations. In our class discussion, we talked about keeping ties with our slave communities. A number of slaves would marry someone from another plantation and maintain a close relationship with

their relations on another plantation. Stanley Felstein wrote that, “when the master had guests, he would gather the slaves at the house to provide entertainment.” The banjo-pickers would play the liveliest tunes, and the little boys and girls, as well as the men and women, would dance and sing. Some of the slave narratives indicated that they danced some of the dances the whites danced such as the minuet and the reel. Most of them preferred their own style of dance consisting of a shuffling of the feet, and a swinging of the arms and shoulders. Hannah Jameson remembers the corn shucking parties.

I sho’ members them corn shuckings. Dey was sumpin’ After the corn was all husked and all the white folks had gone to bed, them, (the slaves) danced the rabbit dance and sing alike this:

Early one morning, on my Massa’s farm

Cut that pigeon wing, Lizy Jane
I heard dem chickens a-givin the alarm
Shake yo feet, Miss Lily Jane
Shake you feet, N-----, It’ll soon be day,
Skoot along lively, Miss Lizy Jane:
Massa ketch us dancing, ’ there’ll be ----
To pay,
We go taters to dig and hoe dat corn
Hit dat duffle-shuffle, Lizy Jane
You’d better be a-----, coz it’ll soon be morn,
Shake dat balmoral, Liz Jane.

Miss Hannah, as she was called by many, stated that, “ dem was the times” (Rawick 610).

Modern Adolescents

Today’s adolescents lead hectic yet happy lives, not having the threat of slavery over their heads; they have the freedom to enjoy the riches of the world given to them. Their lives are full of special activities like school, sports, and shopping. In school, they are very much competitive in getting the best grades and as for sports; they must be on the winning team. In addition, we must not forget shopping for the right clothes, shoes and the newest game machines.

With the freedom of today’s students, they do have some disappointments: for instance gangs, substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. Nevertheless, we can gladly say that most adolescents are good kids.

They have the best medical care in the world, not like the slaves who were often left to suffer. With modern technology, parents of today’s adolescents can have them diagnosed and treated with the best medications.

Most people think and talk about adolescents as if they were a uniform group. Each one is his or her own individual person. Nevertheless, conflict and confusion occurs when the home, the school, and the community are at odds over what a typical adolescent should be like. The development of adolescents takes place within a specific community as the individual teenager's internal resources are nurtured or stifled by the opportunities available. Just as teenagers differ depending on where and how they live, so do the peer groups they form according to Francis A. J. Ianni, author of *The Search for Structure*. Many adolescents begin to form peer groups at an early age. Peer groups are encountered in every community, poverty or affluence or some place in between, some come from broken or intact families, attend good and bad schools but all are part of a community. Modern adolescents also run into gangs and violence today. Adolescents/kids learn about violence by watching it on television or through experiences of family members.

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore---
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over---
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.
Or does it explode

(Langston Hughes, *Dream Deferred*)

Typical Day

A typical day for today's adolescent begins waking up in a safe home with his or her parent(s) after a peaceful night's sleep in a bed. Most adolescents get up to a breakfast or have the luxury of eating breakfast at school. After arriving at school they usually visit with their friends. The day is filling with a free education. Yes! A free education, to learn to read and write in a classroom filled with their friends. Most of the adolescents today are growing up being influenced by their peers rather than their parents. After school, some adolescents spend time doing after school sports like football, basketball, or soccer; others just hanging on the streets, and some work for pay, getting paid for a job well done. At home again, a very large number of adolescents spend hours on the phone and on the Internet. Many devour their time in the tube watching endless programming or playing Playstation video games.

For many African American adolescents, their experiences are not as good. Most face a world of discrimination and many obstacles that the African American adolescent must try to compete in and be successful. Single parents, mostly females, are raising many adolescents today. In the African American community, when the home and school breaks down its safety net, the number of African American adolescent youth

becomes a threat to the community because of the lack of organized activities for them to become involved in. Peer pressure has become the number one influence in their lives, exceeding the influence of parents, teachers, ministers, and other community leaders. That is because they spend more of their time with their peers than with parents, teachers, ministers, and community leaders.

For some, a typical day could be spent in the “Asphalt Institution,” this is what some African Americans call the streets. The street’s curriculum for this institution incorporates many of the same courses that are found in the formal settings according to Jawanza Kunjufu in *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, where he states that they learn sociology, political science, history, biology, and even the physical sciences in the “Asphalt Institution.”

The sociology class consists of studying the so-called pathology of the ghetto. Political science is learning from the unscrupulous exploits of corrupt politicians, history is learning from the years of discrimination and economic deprivation, biology from youth smoking marijuana and sex in dirty alleys and the physical sciences are taught by learning how to endure elements unfit for human consumption. Though these young adolescents do not have a high school diploma, Bachelor’s or Master’s degrees, their credentials have earned them the actual experience of a formal education.

It was a longtime
And this Boy Name Steve
Got shot on 14 Street
And when he got shot
He tried to get up
But every time he try to get up
They kept shooting him
I start crying
And his mother was crying two
And girlfriend had a nervous breakdown.

(Phyllis Lomax, *Accident*)

Possessions

You probably see more and more adolescents in shopping malls and stores today. Many have their own possessions to share with friends, brother, and sisters. An increasing number of them have jobs to earn their money to buy what they want. Clothes with the best name brands fill their closets. They have more than one pair of shoes and numerous pairs of tennis shoes.

Adolescents today have more in their possession than slaves had in their entire lives. Today’s adolescent lives in a different world than the past. Their needs and desires are more complicated and hard to understand. Magazines, CD players, music, cosmetics and

having their own transportation are a small list to start with. In speaking to some of the eighth grade students this year, transportation is their most value possession. Being able to get around the neighborhood is very important. It gives them a sense of being a part of the hood and is a status symbol.

Leisure Time

Leisure time today is spent many ways; at home watching television with family and friends, playing videos games at home or at an arcade or hanging on the streets. Some may be at the mall with friends, while others may go on vacation with their families— fishing, camping, or hunting for fun. Some may even take the opportunity to read a good book, just talk on the phone, or take in a good movie.

Leisure time is time to look for cool advice and hot tips on clothes, dating, and fashion. A few African American adolescents spend more time playing organized sports. For some, living in a one parent household means they must help their family during the time they could be spending with their friends. For instance, working or babysitting younger sisters and brothers takes up a great deal of time. As stated in the typical day section, some African American adolescents are spending leisure time in the “Street Institutions” learning from the hustlers, pimps, street men, militants, and gang leaders. Nevertheless, great deals of adolescents are into organizing activities: Jack and Jill, NAACP, sororities, fraternities and church groups consume a lot of time. These organizations give positive feedback to them and promote growth and success. The church gives them a solid foundation to build their lives on.

CONCLUSION

I am hopeful that this unit will give the African-American adolescent youth a sense of pride in knowing who they are. What their ancestors contributed to history should not be forgotten. What they will contribute will enlighten them to continue to do their best in school. This unit is full of exciting things to do and the joy of doing them will make anyone want to know more of their history.

LESSON PLANS

Objectives of Lessons

Project Clear Objectives

- The student will write, in his/her own words, a composition daily: (Each student will keep a daily journal of their feelings and all of the activities involve in this unit.) This will help the student see how much they have grown throughout this unit
- The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of each culture in the school: They will learn about each other and what special contributions have been made by each culture

- The student is expected to summarize narratives and stories to recall inform, or organize ideas.
- The student is expected to find similarities and differences from each slave narrative: (They will see how each slave lived on the different plantations)
- The student will be able to summarize using an outline, timeline, or graphic organizers: (This will help students to comprehend information more than one way)

Other Objectives

- To look at and analyze the changing attitude toward slavery here in the United States.
- To learn about the lives of African-American slaves (adolscent) before and after the Civil War.
- To analyze, to experience first hand and understand how archaeology is used to interpret history: (By digging and looking for artifacts on the school campus, students will know what it is like to be an archaeologist)
- To analyze and view the video *Dear America: A Picture of Freedom*. (This video will help the students see what it was like be an adolescent slave and to imagine not having the things they have today.)

Before Reading the Slave Narratives

I have incorporated some of Kagan’s cooperative learning activities into my lesson plan because they have increased my students’ learning and taught them how to share in learning. The interaction helps to generate more ideas and help all students get better grades. Please see www.kaganonline.com for further guidelines on how to use Kagan’s principles in your lessons.

Getting Ready

This is a pre-reading activity. Students will explore what ideas they already have and know about slavery. They will write down what they know about adolescents (teenagers) during slavery.

Teacher will use the Kagan Mix-Freeze Group. This is a classbuilding and mastery structure. It provides an opportunity for students to move about the classroom meeting other students and engaging in a discussion with the students in their group. The teacher asks the students to “Mix” (mingle) in an open area of the classroom. On the “Freeze” signal, the students stop where they are, and then “Group” by the number (or problem) the teacher gives. For example, “Mix.... Freeze.... How many blind mice are there?” Students form groups of three. “Mix... Freeze.... What is (two claps) times (three claps)?” Students form groups of six.

Prior to reading the slave narratives, have students give their definitions of “slavery” and discuss why they think the institution of slavery was developed here in the Americas? After reading several narratives, divide the students into small groups and have them

compare their daily life with an adolescent slave in an essay. Students may share their essays with the group and find someone who has similar experiences as they do.

1. Students move to an open area and mix. At the teacher's signal, they freeze and group by number the teacher gives. The teacher will use numbers 1-4; within their groups, students share their first sentences.
2. The process is repeated three more times.
3. Students return to their seats and debrief with the teacher. Papers are collected until the end of the unit; students then will look at these papers and see what they have learned.

In the next assignment for pre-writing, the students will do teambuilding cooperative learning activities. Each student writes three statements, two correct and one incorrect, about themselves. They then read all three to their classmates and the team must guess which one is incorrect.

Lesson One: A Horrible Day and Harriet Ann Jacobs

Students will discuss and write about their feelings. They can identify with those days when everything seems to go wrong. Remind students of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. I chose this story because most students know this story and can identify with Alexander. He was a boy that seems to have everything go wrong in his life.

Students will think, discuss, and write about a slave from the readings and write down a terrible, horrible experience of a slave and compare it to a horrible, terrible day that they themselves have had.

Think-Pair-Share

The teacher asks the student, "Have you ever had a day when things just didn't seem to go right? Think about the things that went wrong that day." Students pair up with a partner and share some of the things that went wrong that day. Use Stand Up and Share* to have the students share some of their thoughts with the whole class.

****Stand Up and Share***

Every student stands. Starting on one side of the classroom each student shares their idea and then sits down. If a student shares an idea that other students are planning to share later, all students with the same idea sit down. All ideas are shared, but none is repeated. The teacher introduces and reads chapters five and six of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, written by Herself, Jacobs, Harriet Ann, 1813-1897*. After the reading, the students think about the story and then share its similarities with their own experiences or ideas that they think they can compare to this chapter.

Students will Roundtable all the different things that happened to Mary on these horrible days. Use Post-its or a small pad of paper to record each response on a different sheet of paper.

Organizing What Happened in the Story Using Sorting

When they are finished, have the students review the events and sort the things that happened to Mary. The teams label their categories and team member # 2 writes their categories on the chalkboard. Starting with Mary’s morning, write down the things in the order they happened to her and follow her through the day.

Making a List of Things That Can Go Wrong Using Brainstorming

Using small pieces of paper, each team brainstorms all the things that could happen to them on a horrible day.

Organizing the List Using Unstructured Sort

Each team sorts their ideas in some way. The categories are labeled to help students in finding particular responses.

Writing About a Horrible Day Using Independent Writing

Each student will independently write a story about the day when nothing seemed to go right. Encourage them to include where they would escape. Use the Kagan Cooperative Learning handout.

Responding to Writing Using Roundtable

After students have completed their narratives, they can share with their team. Each person reads his/her narrative to the team twice. The teacher can make copies for the whole class. Team members listen so that they can point out the words and phrases that had an impact on them, summarize what they heard, or tell the writer how they felt when they were listening. Each student then, with a Round robin share around, comments on the writing. Example of comments might be:

“I like the part when you said....”

“I could tell your sister really bugged you because....”

“The main point to me is....”

“I felt _____ when you read your narrative.”

Lesson Two: Archaeological and Historical Investigation of Fondren Middle School

After reading and discussing chapters 14 and 15 of *I, Too, Am American*, edited by Theresa A. Singleton and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and *The Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site* by Kenneth L. Brown, the students will measure off a section of the playground at Fondren and will do an archaeological dig of Fondren’s history. All items found will be cataloged and labeled. After a week, have the students summarize what feelings they had while digging. Students will share their writing and will do a Three-Step interview (Kagan structure 25) while being videotaped for the class.

The Three-Step Interview is a simple information-sharing structure. It works best in groups of four, but can be easily adapted to groups of three or groups of five.

1. The students are in pairs; one is the interviewer and the other the interviewee. The teacher will have a list of questions made up.
2. The students reverse the roles.
3. The students Round Robin, each team member sharing, in turn, what they learned from their partner.

Lesson Three: Radio Drama of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The students will read chapter four of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin) to create a radio theater. This activity allows students to work in an ensemble, exercise both logic and creativity, and use musical, interpersonal, and verbal intelligences.

Students will work in groups of twelve. Those not having a speaking part can be in charge of setting and creating the stage area. At the end of this unit, have students present the drama to others classes as well as record it on a cassette tape as a radio drama.

Lesson Four: Character Word Web of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Students will create a word web that shows the interrelationship of the characters in the story. This activity can be used with any story that the students are familiar with. For *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the teacher may want to use certain chapters with the students. Before starting this activity, the teacher will create at least ten chart-sized word webs and post them around the classroom.

Step 1

Mount the ten chart-sized word webs, each with a different character's name in the middle circle, in different places of the classroom. Put a supply of markers in each corner, run one copy of Character Word Web handout for each student.

Step 2

Have students select their favorite character from those posted in the room and write it in the center of their Word Web handout.

Step 3

Students go to the corner of the room that matches their character. They pair and discuss the attributes their character has and the relationship they have with the other characters in the story. Students make some notes on their character word webs. Students pair with a different partner and discuss the same topic. They take notes again.

Step 4

The students gather around the large word-web, fill the outer rectangle with the other characters from the story. Then they can work together to fill in the word web with their character's attributes and relations with the other characters using their own character word web as a reference.

Step 5

Leave the word web mounted in the classroom so other groups may view and see what the other character groups have done. Remember to keep students in pairs. See step 3 again.

Step 6

Students return to their teams and discuss what they learned about the character they studied. Their notes provide prewriting ideas for a character sketch.

Lesson Five: *The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl*

The teacher will use the Scholastic teaching guide for this lesson:

<<http://place.scholastic.com/dearamerica/books/guides/picture.htm>>. Students will view the video *Dear America: A Picture of Freedom* based on the book by Patricia McKissack, *A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl, Belmont Plantation, 1859*. After watching the video the students will make a "Freedom Quilt." Some students may want to read the book—encourage them to do so. The teacher should have all materials ready for this activity—sewing machine, pre-cut fabric, markers, tape etc.

Step 1

Each student will write about his or her vision of freedom. This will help them to visualize their picture for the art for the quilt.

Step 2

Sketch out your idea on paper. Around the border, print a brief explanation of your depiction of freedom.

Step 3

Transfer your sketch onto fabric, allowing an extra inch around the outside edge for sewing pieces together. Do not forget to tell them to sign their names!

Step 4

When the quilt is finished, display it proudly where everyone (including visitors to your school) may see it.

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