

AFRICAN DIASPORA RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & INQUIRY BUILDING

Topic: “I am unbreakable”: Developing and Maintaining Identity and Other Forms of Resistance to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Identity is defined as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is.” The human identity is made up of a complex web to create an unique identity: one’s customs, past experiences, family, origin, likes, dislikes, and many other factors all combine together to create an identity for every individual. Meanwhile resistance is defined as “the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument or the ability not to be affected by something, especially adversely.” Yet in the course of human history there have been groups of people who have had major parts and aspects of their identity taken from them and who has resistance bondage in unique and influential ways. Sadly, for the men, women, and children who were coerced into the transatlantic slave trade both lost and gained major pieces of their identity: they lost parts of their family history, family members, their traditional homes, and yet they gained a deeply painful and degrading title... slave. Even with such hardships facing the African slaves they were able to retain, adapt, and create a sense of identity that not only held true to their roots but also functioned as an act of resistance to the very chains they were bound in. These defiant identities developed by the African slaves developed into many different distinct cultures that are still present in the Atlantic world today. It is when one looks deeper into slave narratives and other primary sources from the people involved in the transatlantic slave trade (both slave and owner) that one is able to unravel the exceptional identities developed by African slaves to see how they used their individuality to both cope with and retaliate against slavery. This curriculum guide delves into the concepts and questions surrounding the idea of identity and other forms of resistance (open and private) in African slaves to give students and instructors a deeper understanding and respect for these acts of resistance and the unbreakable will of the African slave.

STANDARDS ALLIGNED TO THIS TOPIC

The following clarifying objectives show how this guide can align t either the NC Essential Standards for American History: The Founding Principals, Civics & Economics or the NC Essential Standards for American History I.

American History: The Founding Principals, Civics & Economics:

FP.C&G.1.4 Analyze the principles and ideals underlying American democracy in terms of how they promote freedom (i.e. separation of powers, rule of law, limited government, democracy, consent of the governed / **individual rights –life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, self-government**, representative democracy, **equal opportunity, equal protection under the law, diversity**, patriotism, etc.).

FP.C&G.2.3 Evaluate the U.S. Constitution as a “**living Constitution**” in terms of how the words in the Constitution and Bill of Rights have been interpreted and applied throughout their existence (e.g., precedents, rule of law, Stare decisis, judicial review, supremacy, equal protections, “establishment clause,” symbolic speech, due process, right to privacy, etc.).

FP.C&G.3.1 Analyze how the rule of law establishes limits on both the governed and those who govern while holding true to **the ideal of equal protection under the law** (e.g., **the Fourteenth Amendments**, Americans with Disabilities Act, equal opportunity legislation).

American History I:

AH1.H.1.3 Use Historical Analysis and Interpretation to: 1. **Identify issues and problems in the past.** 2. **Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples** in the

AFRICAN DIASPORA RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & INQUIRY BUILDING

	<p>past. 3. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation. 4. Evaluate competing historical narratives and debates among historians. 5. Evaluate the influence of the past on contemporary issues.</p> <p>AH1.H.2 Analyze key political, economic and social turning points in American History using historical thinking.</p> <p>AH1.H.3.3 Explain the roles of various racial and ethnic groups in settlement and expansion through Reconstruction and the consequences for those groups (e.g., Germans, Scotch-Irish, Africans, Native American Indians, Irish, Chinese, etc.).</p> <p>AH1.H.3.4 Analyze voluntary and involuntary immigration trends through Reconstruction in terms of causes, regions of origin and destination, cultural contributions, and public and governmental response (e.g., Puritans Pilgrims, American Indians, Quakers, Scotch-Irish, Chinese, Africans, indentured servants, slavery, Middle Passage, farming, ideas of the Enlightenment, etc.).</p> <p>AH1.H.4.1 Analyze the political issues and conflicts that impacted the United States through Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., American Revolution, Constitutional Convention, Bill of Rights, development of political parties, nullification, slavery, states’ rights, Civil War).</p> <p>AH1.H.8.3 Evaluate the extent to which a variety of groups and individuals have had opportunity to attain their perception of the “American Dream” through Reconstruction (e.g., various ethnic, religious, racial, socio-economic groups of people; plantation society;</p>
KEY CONCEPTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resistance ▪ Family ▪ Adaptation ▪ Migration ▪ Identity ▪ Conflict ▪ Change ▪ Diffusion ▪ Roots ▪ Perception ▪ Defiance ▪ Unity ▪ Culture ▪ Home
OTHER CONCEPTS TO CONSIDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values ▪ Power ▪ Social identity ▪ Outward v. inward appearance ▪ Growth ▪ Movement ▪ Freedom ▪ Spirit ▪ Faith
GENERALIZATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Governments are often founded on principles or change and adaptation to new ideas, beliefs, and public opinions. 2- Acts of resistance to slavery included major events, such as uprising or rebellions, organized running away, smaller acts of everyday defiance, and also by slaves taking their lives into their own hands and committing suicide. 3- Language is a key element of developing and maintaining identity. 4- There are many different kinds and forms of communication that can come about either accidental or deliberate; sometimes both. 5- Religion and faith can be used to sustain identity in difficult times and can be used to support and justify active change.
OVERARCHING	

AFRICAN DIASPORA RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & INQUIRY BUILDING

INQUIRY QUESTIONS (Write the number of the resource for each question)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Does a distinctive culture and identity of African Slaves still hold relevance in today's world 2- How has the idea of a distinctive culture and identity of the African Slaves evolved to still hold relevance in today's world? 3- In what ways was language used to openly and subtly resist slavery? 4- What role did religion and faith play in the act of open resistance and in maintaining identity in the face of bondage? 5- What similarities and differences can be gleamed by the experiences and acts of resistance from slaves of the Americas and Caribbean? 6- What identities were, formed, changed, or solidified because of the transatlantic slave trade?
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Slave resistance at work http://www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/slavery/against-slavery/black-resistance-against-slavery/slave-resistance-at-work/ http://www.understandingslavery.com/images/stories/documents/themes/resistanceandrebillion.pdf http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/04/ColonialSlaveResistance.pdf This is a link to a pdf lesson developed by the NC Civic Education Consortium and includes primary sources, graphic organizers, and a lesson that could be accomplished in 90 minutes on the different forms of Colonial Slave Resistance found specifically in the colonial era of America (however the themes and resistance forms presented in this lesson are universal). This is a great lesson to use to introduce students to the idea of different form of resistance performed by slaves. Most of the time students only think of the term resistance as a violent, physical act- this lesson helps students to understand that slave resistance could take on many different forms with different impacts on their and other slaves lives. This source also includes items related specifically to North Carolina and its role in the slave system of the South. 2- Slave Songs: http://www.harriet-tubman.org/songs-of-the-underground-railroad/ http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1601-1700/slave-songs-transcend-sorrow-11630165.html These two sources examine the lyrics of slave songs that proved instrumental in slave escape through the Underground Railroad in the United States. Some songs served as a way to openly pass on information vital to slave escape without being detected by their owners or overseers; some songs served as a way to offer hope and strength in difficult times- paralleling the struggle of the African slave to the trials of Jews in the Bible. Teachers can use these songs in source analysis activities on their own or in comparison of other ways slaves were able to pass along information (such as in the use of the Quilting Code). Many of these songs are instantly recognizable and can be found set to their music on youtube.com. Teachers can also use the songs to form an activity where student listen to the songs, analyze the lyrics, and reflect upon the tone and message of the songs. 3- Slave Quilting and the Secret Code: https://www.owensound.ca/osblackhistory/underground-railroad-quilt-code https://www2.oakland.edu/oujournal/files/8_70-79.pdf

AFRICAN DIASPORA RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & INQUIRY BUILDING

Language comes in many forms. This theme is perfectly illustrated in these two sources. Because many slaves were illiterate (due to strict laws forbidding the reading or writing or instruction of slaves) other forms of communication were needed besides the spoken words. The quilting code is an example of a form of communication spring up both of necessity and on accident. The use of quilts was used to convey information to fleeing slaves. These quilts could be displayed to give vital information to slaves passing by or they could serve as a permanent visual map that all slaves could understand and “memorize” for use on their way to freedom.

4- Nat Turner’s Rebellion:

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/9.0>

<http://www.natturnerproject.org/>

5- St. John Slave Rebellion of 1733 Archives:

<https://kathmanduk2.wordpress.com/2008/04/02/from-the-archives-st-john-slave-rebellion-of-1733/>

The website takes to you and excerpt of the book: St. John Off the Beaten Track by Gerald Singer, Natasha Singer, and Dean Hulse which included transcripts of primary sources of the slave uprising on the island of S. John in 1733. This site is great in its simplicity in that it offers a step by step story of the rebellion; including background information of St. John, the Danish involvement in the slave trade and the historical reasons for the slave uprising taking places and finally with the lasting results of the rebellion.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/thirteen-colonies/resources/slave-revolt-west-indies-1733>

http://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=ant_etd

6- Slave Suicide Sources:

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/emancipation/text2/suicide.pdf>

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/emancipation/text2/text2read.htm>

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/community/text1/text1read.htm>

7- Letters from the Slave Revolt in Martinique

Scanned copies of letter are included.

Included are three letters describing the events and rationale behind the slave uprising in Martinique in the late 1780s. One letter is from a white citizen describing the events and his copies of letters written by two of the leaders of the rebellion. In the letters from the leaders of the rebellion they use religion and languages to defend their uprising and offer a plea for freedom. These letters who how highly educated these men were how each one illustrated a keen understanding of law, reason, and religion to offer up concrete ideas to support their request for freedom. Both letters from the leaders of the rebellion portray the

AFRICAN DIASPORA RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & INQUIRY BUILDING

rebellion as a last resort in a long line of petitions and negotiations for change in the society and social structure of Martinique. These primary sources can either be used along or in conjunction with other documents from their geographical area or different locations; for example, the United States to compare the logical arguments offered by slaves who were requesting their God given right to liberty. These letters could also be used in comparison activities of writings from different time periods arguments for the liberation of slaves. The letters could be used individually in source analysis activities where students analyze the language, arguments, syntax, and supporting evidence in their quest for deliverance of their bonds. These letters could be used to understand how the ideas of the Enlightenment and the success of the American and unfolding French Revolutions inspired many slave areas to rise up on their own to seek change.

8- Prophecies of Slave Rebellion
Scanned copies of document are included

9- Transatlantic Slave trade: Make or Break Identities
By Teresa Muse
Scanned PDF download included.

10- Lyerly, Bethany Jay & Cynthia Lynn. *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016.

This is a very helpful book. It offers no primary or secondary sources, but it does offer an in-depth look at American slavery and different approaches to teaching this complex topic in the classroom. It compares and contrast the American slave system to other slaves systems in the history of the world to bring readers to a deeper understanding and a different train of thought to American slavery. It does offer introduction, reflection, and analytical activities to use in the classroom; however, one has to go in-depth reading to get to them as they are not laid out in a lesson format. There are no pdf or scanned excerpt of the book available so its se can be limited; however it is well worth the buy.