

Slavery in Early New England

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Background

These lessons will be taught to 8th grade social studies students as part of a year-long early American history / civics class. The unit is broken into four days, but I expect it may take five days when implemented. This mini-unit on slavery in New England will be taught in late fall after covering Early Americans and the Declaration of Independence and before reviewing the Constitutional Convention. Virtually all of my students concluded their 7th grade social studies class with a unit on racism and privilege. All students will have iPads

Essential Understandings:

- Slavery existed in New England and it played a significant role in the region's economic and social development.
- 17th and 18th century slavery in New England was different than 19th century slavery in the South
- The study of slavery is fraught with contradictions and ambiguity. It would be a mistake to try to over-simplify this institution.
- In most cases the primary reason people allowed slavery was to increase their wealth.
- Understanding the history of slavery in New England may help us to better understand the treatment of African Americans in New England after slavery was extinguished

At the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Provide evidence of the existence of slavery in early New England
- Describe the experience of enslaved people in early New England
- Compare and contrast the experiences of enslaved people in Southern colonies vs. New England
- Evaluate the potential impact of Northern slavery on freed blacks in the North

Summary Plan:

Day 1 - Prior knowledge, context

Day 2 - Slavery in Boston - history, statistics, living conditions

Day 3 - Slavery in rural New England - history, statistics, living conditions

Day 4 - Unit summary

Day 1 - Prior knowledge, context

Class Preparation:

- Hang unit objectives on chart paper at front of room
- Post links to online resources for the day to my website
- Create google question on reviewing slave voyage data
- Bring in products for triangular trade activity

Class Procedures:

- Introduce the unit - review objectives, schedule and assessments
- Review guidelines for addressing sensitive topics as previously discussed as a class (respect for and sensitivity to each others' unique responses and perspectives to the topic, openness to consider new perspectives)
- Connect back to 7th grade unit on racism (prior knowledge)
 - Word splash on white board (or class discussion) - all students reflect and comment on board about last year's unit
 - Class discussion on last year's race unit
- Discuss the ambiguity and contradictions of slavery - were looking for understanding, not quick and easy answers. Critical thinking skills will be vital during this unit
- We will focus on the Atlantic slave trade - there has been slavery before and since in all parts of the world that we will not have time to address. Students should not assume that this is the only example of slavery.
- Word Splash - ask all students to go to the whiteboard and list a word or phrase that comes to mind when they think of slavery in the United States. Discuss responses as a class (draw attention to any themes that emerge. Challenge students to apply their critical thinking skills - how do they know that these perceptions are accurate?)
- Show the history of transatlantic slave voyages from 1500 to 1875:
<http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>
 - Review together as a class - review the meaning of the individual fields and show how the website can be adjusted
 - give students a chance to review on their own on their individual ipads and ask them all to provide 2 - 3 observations in response to a google question posed on my website
 - Discuss observations as a class
- Display Transatlantic slave trade from The African American Migration Experience:
<http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/landing.cfm?migration=1>
 - Allow students to review on their own ipads and then interpret this data as a class
- Transition to the motivation for the slave trade in the Americas
 - Triangular trade activity - students identify where items came from and where they were brought to as a result of triangular trade
- Connect today's lesson back to the essential understanding of the unit - What did we learn in today's lesson that provides some insights into these questions?
 - Slavery existed in New England and it played a significant role in the region's economic and social development.
 - The study of slavery is fraught with contradictions and ambiguity. It would be a mistake to try to over-simplify this institution.
 - In most cases the primary reason people allowed slavery was to increase their wealth.

Homework: Students interview an adult and ask them to describe one thing they know about the history of slavery in New England - response posted in response to a google survey question

Day 2 - Slavery in Boston - History, Statistics, the life of enslaved people in Boston

Class Preparation:

- Post link to Bonner Boston map on website
- Prepare jigsaw activity materials

Class Procedures:

- Review unit objectives, agreed upon discussion guidelines and lessons from day 1
- Review responses to last night's homework - all students pull up last night's homework responses. Capture and display student responses on a google doc to be shared with all students
- Pose question to students: Did slavery exist in New England? Why or why not? How could we find out? Why might it be challenging to find good information on this topic? Why might there be a misperception? How might slavery in the past affect New England today?
- As critical thinkers how can we learn about slavery in Boston? What evidence would be helpful?
- Start by looking at a map of Boston in 1722:
 - https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=1733&mode=zoomify&img_step=1&
 - Presented on screen and students view on their ipads
 - What factual observations can be made? - smaller than today, many ocean related businesses, any proof of slavery? (no)
- Compare Boston of the past to Boston of today: [Boston, old and new 1630-2012 - Google](#)
 - Observations, implications
- Review of Primary documents - jigsaw activity - students will be divided into six groups. Each group will receive one of the six primary sources listed below and will be asked to record in their notes and facts or inferences they can make from each primary source. After about five minutes rotate primary sources until each group has seen each primary source. When completed primary sources are displayed to entire class and each group presents one of the primary sources
 - 1641 Body of Liberties
 - 1646 - General Laws of MA Bay
 - 1693 - Rules for the Society of Negroes
 - 1696 - A good master well served
 - 1700 - The Selling of Joseph
 - 1773 - Felix freedom petition
- Notes delivered to students via Google slides
 - Mid 1700's - 12-15% of people are slaves in Boston (app. 1700)
 - Many slaves owned by middle class to help them work, not to be servants for rich people
 - MA largest slave colony until 1700 (started in Salem, 1638)
 - Slaves provided inexpensive labor that helped people gain wealth. They could also be sold after appreciating in value
 - Some Northern slaves married
 - Laws prevented slaves from being badly hurt for no reason (although it happened)
 - Most slavery had ended by 1800 for a variety of legal and other reasons
 - In Boston there were many levels of freedom: slaves, indentured servants, natives, immigrants, kids, women, etc
- Connect today's lesson back to the essential understanding of the unit:
 - Slavery existed in New England and it played a significant role in the region's economic and social development.

- The study of slavery is fraught with contradictions and ambiguity. It would be a mistake to try to over-simplify this institution.
- In most cases the primary reason people allowed slavery was to increase their wealth.

What did we learn in today's lesson that provides some insights into these questions?

Homework: ***Respond to Google question on line: In 3 to 5 sentences: Describe how slaves and the slave trade affected typical Bostonians in the 1700's

Day 3 - Slavery in Rural New England

Class Procedure:

- Review unit objectives, agreed upon discussion guidelines and lessons from day 1&2
- Review, display and discuss student responses to to last night's homework questions
 - Random pairing of students - have each pair report to the class on something unexpected that came up in other student responses to last night's homework.
- Transition to rural New England and Deerfield specifically - To learn about slavery in New England we'll take a look at Deerfield, MA
- Project Google earth - project Deerfield today - Discussion - what geographic features are noticed? Possible impact of geography on the settling of the region (discuss rivers and soil)
- Project google slide of Deerfield in mid-1700's. Key points:
 - 50/50 loyalist vs. Patriot
 - 1704 many killed in raid
 - 1750 38% of houses had slaves (21 slaves in total)
 - Excellent soil, rivers - competition for geographically desirable land
 - Competition with natives and other people for valuable farming land
 - At the edge of the frontier
- Project pictures of Old Deerfield today - Student observations?
- We will look at Deerfield to better understand slavery in rural New England. Discuss the challenges of finding evidence or clues about what specifically happened in a place like Deerfield. Why might there have been slaves in Deerfield? - discuss in pairs and then as a class
- We will look at an example of a resource we can use to infer what's happening in a region when there's little other direct evidence.-
- Evidence of slavery in Early New England - Account book of Elijah Williams - 1757 - display on screen and have students look at on ipad:
 - http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/adv_search/results.jsp?topic=2&searchtext=
- Put students in pairs. Have them review the account book and edit a google doc showing what facts can be learned from the account book and what can be inferred. Project and discuss as a class.
- Send students link to Old Deerfield map of African American historical sites: <http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/activities/afam/index.html>
- Assign pairs of students to a particular site on the map. Students should read about the site and plan to report back to the class what happened at that site.
- Primary Source Analysis - what can we infer from primary sources? -
 - Students put into five group. Each group is given one of the following primary sources and is asked to prepare to present to the class what facts are provided and what additional information might be inferred from the primary source

- i. Advertisement - slave for sale
 - ii. Sales receipt for sold slave - Samuel Stanton
 - iii. Manumission document for Peter
 - iv. The Bars Fight - by Lucy Terry
 - v. 1792 Bill of Sale for "Cleona"
- o Each group presents while the class takes notes on the presentation
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 - o In most cases the primary reason people allowed slavery was to increase their wealth.
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What did we learn in today's lesson that provides some insights into these questions?

Homework: None

Online Resources:

Time permitting the following online resources could be displayed and discussed to further learn about slavery in rural New England.

Three specific pieces of primary source evidence showing slavery in New England - two bill of sales and a complaint:

http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/adv_search/results.jsp?topic=2&searchtext=

Map of old Deerfield with information on 23 sites:

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/activities/afram/index.html>

Optional: watch videos on what work was done at the time:

<http://memorialhall.mass.edu/activities/tools/AAtools.html>

Ad in a Boston paper about a runaway slave:

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/turns/view.jsp?itemid=5928&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=0&subthemeid=14>

Bill of sale for Prince:

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/turns/view.jsp?itemid=7799&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=0&subthemeid=15>

Day 4 - Unit Summary

- By the end of the Revolutionary war the number of enslaved people in New England was reduced considerably - put students in five groups and ask them to analyze the following resources linked to my website:
 - Data from “Slavery in MA” : <http://historyofmassachusetts.org/slavery-in-massachusetts/>
 - Statistics on slavery and its end from Weber:
http://faculty.weber.edu/kmackay/statistics_on_slavery.htm
 - Show data from civil discourse this: <http://www.civildiscourse-historyblog.com/blog/2017/1/3/when-did-slavery-really-end-in-the-north>
- Display each resource one at a time and ask each group to offer an analysis of what learned from each resource
- What happened to New England slaves? Class discussion making the following points
 - Some northern slaves sold to southern colonies / states so investment not lost
 - Resentment from non-whites when former slaves took jobs
 - Some towns hesitant to take in former slaves - fear of needing to support into the future
- Comparison to southern slavery
 - Don't compare to southern slavery and assume it's okay - show that if something is bad, it's still bad even if it's less bad than something else (compare to a bully mean to one kid vs ten kids)
 - Isolation vs living with many other enslaved people - what's the impact
 - Puritan culture - how might religious attitudes affected the treatment of enslaved people
 - Literacy - many northern slaves taught to read so they could read the bible
 - Economic drivers
- Complexities
 - Ministers enslaving others
 - freed slaves enslaving others
 - Marriage among enslaved people
 - Other levels of non-freedom
- What are the implications of this history for today and our study of US history?
- How do we apply our critical thinking skills to the study of slavery?

Unit Assessment

Students will write a five paragraph essay about slavery in New England following the model that we have discussed in class and using information presented in class (selecting an arguable thesis and supporting that thesis with three controlling ideas, each with its own paragraph). Grading will be based on the essay rubric previously presented to students. The goal of this assignment is for students to demonstrate their understanding this topic while practising their persuasive writing skills

Other Resources to consider:

- Slavery today lesson plan: <https://www.scribd.com/document/93676879/Slavery-in-our-World-Today>
- Legacies of slavery in the Americas:
<http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=1&topic=10>

- 20 minute Ted Talk featuring Byran Stevenson:
- https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice/up-next