

Unit Title: The Transatlantic Slave Trade (Roberts NEH: 2019)

Context: This slavery lesson derives from, and is an extension of, the “A Web of Community” Primary Source Session presented by Kitty Lowenthal during the 2019 “African-Americans in the Making of Early New England” workshop at Deerfield, MA. It is a two-day lesson that is part of a larger unit that addresses the complexity of the North American slave trade, its justification, the contribution of nations and individuals, the interrelatedness of and dependence on triangle trade, slavery’s scope, the life of an enslaved person and how it differed whether that person was enslaved in northern or southern English colonies, its growth and proliferation, its far-reaching impacts and its influence in contemporary society.

Grade Level and Content Area: Middle School (grade 8), social studies

Oregon State Eighth Grade Social Studies Standards:

8.25 Evaluate the influence of the intersections of identity, including but not limited to, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and class on the experiences of peoples, groups, and events.

8.28 Identify issues related to historical events to recognize the power, authority, and governance as it relates to systemic oppression and its impact on ethnic and religious groups, as well as other historically persecuted individuals in the United States in the modern era (bias, injustice, discrimination, and stereotypes). (History)

Day Four (approx.): Slavery: It’s Complicated

Introduction: We have discussed how European countries, seeing great opportunity in the Americas, began to establish settlements in the Americas and how, with their arrival, life was forever changed for indigenous people. We discussed how the enslavement of people was not limited to the indigenous and that estimates suggest that 13 million people were taken from the African continent in the bellies of slave ships to work in the Americas. Today, by considering a primary source, the slave ship “Sally’s” manifest, we can know what was required in men and material for a slaving expedition, but more importantly, we can discover who was involved, directly or indirectly, in the slave trade and see how far-reaching the practice of slavery was in the North American colonies.

Objective:

- To acquaint students with what was required to build and outfit a slave ship
- To identify the vast array of individuals who were involved in the slave trade
- To visually illustrate the complexity and complicity of the slave trade

Students will understand:

- That slavery was not an enterprise that was solely limited to the wealthy nor was it only the wealthy who benefitted or profited from it
- That slave ships properly outfitted with trade goods, materials, equipment, and stores (food, etc.) involved, knowingly or unwittingly, a vast cross-section of colonial society.

Primary and Secondary Sources

- http://www.rihs.org/images/SALLY_activity_final.pdf
- <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org/guides-and-materials/discussion-materials/pbs-discussion-guides>
- <http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm>
- <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item106661.html>

Materials and equipment

- Individual Chromebooks
- Individually laminated and numbered cards
- Data gathering worksheet
- 1 - Skein of yarn of sufficient length to reach all participants
- Sentence stems as appropriate for reporting out

Differentiation

- Tag - Assign items of greater complexity with multiple “discoveries.” Partner?
- IEP - Assign items of lesser complexity with a single “discovery.” Partner!
- ELL - Access to related NEWSELA content in Spanish

Process:

- Students will begin by choosing a number and read the object’s description aloud
- Students then, using Chromebooks, will research the object(s) further to determine its 18th Century origin and the skills and labor required to produce it, and who might have produced or provided it, how and with whom it might be traded, and record it on their data gathering worksheet.
- After individual findings are presented, students take hold of a continuous length of yarn that will ultimately connect each student (individual/item) to slavery; the numbered manifest items being randomly distributed about the room will yield a web made of yarn.
- In addition to their findings, students contribute a suitable image to a classroom display.

Assessment:

The culmination of this lesson takes a formative assessment involving a student-written reflection on their learning/understanding of the complexity of the slave trade and how many people were involved and contributed to it.

