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African Americans and the Making of Early New England
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This lesson is meant to be the introductory lesson to a fifth grade unit about the trans-Atlantic slave trade with a focus on slavery in the North, specifically New England.

Essential Questions:

1. What is essential about being human?
2. What is the distinction between the term “slave” vs “enslaved”?
3. How do we make space for absent voices in history?

Ground work:

Send an outline and letter to families to introduce the study. It may contain some of the readings and websites (includes resources in inclusive home languages). Encourage families to embark on this journey with us and discuss the topic with their children. Invite families to a culminating event at the end of the unit.

Representation Matters?

Objective: Students will be able to understand the absence of “people of the global majority” on our money and the over-representation of rich white men.

Time: 30 minutes

This lesson might be done at the beginning of the year, as it is not specific to this topic, but it allows students a lens to understand how inequity is present in everyday occurrences. Look at money and discuss what you observe. Discuss the inequity of representation using guiding questions.

In small groups give students real money (both coins and bills) to observe. 10 minutes

Start a discussion using these questions ((Visual thinking strategies):

What’s going on in these coins?

What makes you say that?

What else can we find?

Discuss that idea that as we study history, we need to pay attention and work to include the contributions of a wider representation of voices.

Labels

Objective: Students will be able to identify the ways in which labels are harmful and how they dehumanize people. What labels describe you?

Now just take one of your outer labels. (EX. Puerto Rican, Latina, drummer, basketball player) Imagine if that was the only thing that could identify you. Imagine people calling you that openly and just that instead of your name.

How would you feel if you could not show your true self? Have you ever encountered that? How did that make you feel?

What is Slavery?

This lesson is meant to be the introductory lesson to a fifth grade unit about the trans-Atlantic slave trade with a focus on slavery in the North, specifically New England.

Objective: Build on what students already know to create a definition of slavery that emphasizes the dehumanization, the permanence, and the lasting effects – it's more than just people working for no money (as younger children often come to think about slavery).

Timing: One class period of 40 minutes.

5 minutes: Pose the question -What is slavery? 5 minutes to think and write about what they already know.

10 minutes: Go over a basic definition of slavery – Control and ownership of one person's labor/work by another person, legally enforced (one example of a definition from Harvey Amani Whitfield's book, *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1770-1810*) in more comprehensible language for children). Talk to students about how it's really more complicated than that. We're talking about ownership, but not of objects, of people. When we're talking about slavery we can't forget that we're talking about real people like you and me.

5 minutes: Introduce activity – students will walk around the room in small groups and read quotes posted on the walls in different areas of the room. They can talk in their small groups. The quotes will either be about the experience of slavery or will be the actual words of enslaved people. Remind students to think of something that stands out to them to discuss in the whole group.

10 minutes: Students read quotes and talk to each other, teacher(s) circulates and helps facilitate discussions or help with reading.

10 minutes: Discussion – students can share things they noticed or things that stuck out to them that they think are important to understanding what slavery is. Also go over quotes that no one brings up. Pose these questions/revisit essential questions with students:

- Why would we want to use the words “enslaved people” instead of “slaves”? Lead students to understand that if we always want to remember that we are talking about people, we can’t make “slave” their whole identity.
- What is essential about being human?
- How do we make space for absent voices in history?

Ideas for quotes to post:

“Those who came in chains or were sold...were branded with a **deficit** that would last through generations. And for generations the system firmly held its grip.” *Ten Hills Farm*. C.S. Manegold, p. 49

Owners had the ability to “rip black families apart.” *Ten Hills Farm*. C.S. Manegold, p. 179

Enslavement included taking away native names and culture, and forced unpaid work. *Black Portsmouth*, Mark J. Sammons and Valerie Cunningham, 2004, p. 14

Slavery was “permanent, race-based, and automatically transferred to the next generation.” *Black Portsmouth*, Mark J. Sammons and Valerie Cunningham, 2004, p. 15

“I am Belinda, an African, since the age of twelve a Slave.” “Belinda’s Petition: a poem by Rita Dove”

“She neither forgot nor forgave her abduction [from Africa] and always recalled, as though it had just occurred, the white men who seized her and a group of other children playing near a well...when she was 12.” *Mr. and Mrs. Prince: How an Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Family Moved Out of Slavery and into Legend*, Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, 2009, p.71

‘I have heard her say, ‘Any time while I was a slave, if one minute’s freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it – just to stand one minute on God’s earth a free woman – I would.’ Catherine Maria Sedgwick recalling Elizabeth “Mum Bett” Freeman, from Catherine Sedgwick’s manuscript, 1853, p.19

“Masters often renamed a slave after completing a purchase.” From “Goddess of Love to Unloved Wife”, Richard A. Bailey, *Slavery/Antislavery in New England*, Dublin Seminar, 2003, p. 47

“They were not yet able or willing to recognize the humanity...of African men and women.” From “Goddess of Love to Unloved Wife”, Richard A. Bailey, *Slavery/Antislavery in New England*, Dublin Seminar, 2003, p. 55

“I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch’d from Afric’s fancy’d happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent’s breast?”

“To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth”: a poem by Phillis Wheatley

Culminating event

Objective: To link the learning for families.

Time: 3 hours practice/planning, 1 for the event

Families attend a readers' theater or other activity as determined by the students