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Life After the Civil War:

A Fifth-Sixth Grade Curriculum to Address Post-
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as a Way to Provide Background
for Lingering Inequality

An Integrative Masters Project

by Debbie Nehmad

Summer 2018

Life After the Civil War:

A Fifth-Sixth Grade Curriculum to Address Post-Emancipation Discrimination

as a Way to Provide Background for Lingering Inequality

by

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Childhood General Education

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Abstract

*Life After the Civil War: A Fifth-Sixth Grade Curriculum to Address Post-Emancipation
Discrimination as a Way to Provide Background for Lingering Inequality*

by Debbie Nehmad

As part of the coursework required for EDUC 517, I decided to address an extensive gap in my own knowledge of U.S. history: the aftermath of the Civil War and Emancipation for newly freed slaves. This work felt imperative to me because of the uptick in visible racism and violence against the black community coupled with feelings that I could not respond intelligently to racist and judgmental comments I would hear from members of my community. This project includes a researched analysis of the problematic mentalities I observed and aims to address them proactively by helping middle school students develop deeper knowledge of life after the Civil War. At the core of this curriculum is an evocative historical fiction novel which has been chosen for its ability to evoke historical empathy, its relatability to the intended age group, and its first-person perspective of life for newly freed slaves in the south. The goal of this curriculum is to raise students who are invested in not only learning but in holding onto our country's history so that they can see today's realities in light of the history that spawned them.

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Part One: Context for Work

Personal Background

First and foremost, I am a teacher. More specifically, I am a 27-year-old Jewish woman from Brooklyn who comes from a non-observant, immigrant family from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I grew up in the Jewish day school system, at first in a Conservative day school for K-8th grade, and then in a Modern Orthodox yeshiva day school for high school despite my parents not being particularly religiously practicing themselves.

As important as who I am currently is who I was as a student when I was growing up. I was a child who was hungry for knowledge but incredibly disinterested in school. I was an unstimulated learner in my traditional textbook-heavy environment, and became a very disinterested student who was merely “getting by” despite having a sharp, creative mind that was universally recognized by my teachers. Although I wouldn’t have been able to name it at the time, I think I simply didn’t have a reason to care about the content with which I was presented, *especially* when it came to history. I feel it’s so common for students to feel completely removed from the history they’re learning. They have no context for history, are asked to memorize dates and locations rather than understand the personal impact of the event, and certainly don’t know why knowing such things matter other than the hackneyed and unfulfilled promise of ‘learning from our mistakes’ so that ‘history doesn’t repeat itself,’ as though the events that happened in the past are isolated to that past and have no continued, lasting impact on the world of today. My disinterest in history left me feeling both ignorant and apathetic about politics in today’s world.

When I went to college, my world opened up. I met people of different backgrounds than me for the first time. (After all, growing up, *I* was the “diversity” for having spoken

Spanish at home!) I became involved in the GLASA (Gay Lesbian and Straight Alliance) at my school of which many of my friends were a part. I also learned how many of my peers had taken out loans on their own in order to pay CUNY tuition, one that had practically been scoffed at by my parents for how inexpensive it was compared to the college tuition they paid for each of my sisters. I felt like I was finally seeing life in the 'real world,' realizing how vastly different my realities were from those of so many others. Perhaps the most impactfully sobering moment of my college experience was the heartbreaking murder of Trayvon Martin. The horror of the event was shocking. It triggered a slew of conversations about race and racism that I had never been apart of before and prompted the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement. As we know, only a few years later, Michael Brown was killed by police, starting an onslaught of shootings of unarmed black men by police all across the country. These devastating shootings made me realize even further how ignorant I was, and made me want to know more so that I could help bring about change to a country that clearly still had many improvements to make.

How My Identity and Experiences Shape this Work

Naming the Problems at Play. Growing up in a Jewish community that was both racially and socioeconomically very homogenous, I was exposed to many comments about blacks and other minorities that were either explicitly or more subtly, quite racist. As much as I feel that it goes without saying, it's important to assert explicitly that not all Jewish communities are this way, nor do all of them represent the sentiments noted within this section, as seen most notably by the fact that Jewish leaders such as Abraham Joshua Heschel have often been allies to the African American community specifically. With that

said, while my specific community had many great values, it was also quite sheltered and quite ignorant when it comes to race and race history. The following are a few brief summary analyses of the comments and attitudes I observed growing up. An expanded explanation of these topics appear in the *Literature Review section*.

Internalized dominance. One of the common phenomena I believe I observed was what Lee Anne Bell (2016) calls *internalized dominance*. Internalized dominance “occurs when members of the dominant white group take their group’s socially advantaged status as normal and deserved, rather than recognizing how it has been conferred through racialized systems of inequality.” (Bell, 2016, pg. 137) My suspicion is that this phenomenon occurs within Jewish communities at least in part because of their families’ personal history of having started out in poverty. Their thinking is, “My grandparents came here with nothing and were poor, but they worked hard and got out of it. If the Jews could do it, why can’t the blacks?”

The Myth of Meritocracy. There are obviously several issues with this line of thinking, but one of the most commonly held ones is what Heather Beth Johnson (2006) calls “the myth of meritocracy”-- that is, that individuals achieve the success that they deserve as based on efforts they either did or did not put forth. Apparently, “Americans overwhelmingly believe that widespread opportunity exists for all individuals to succeed, that we achieve what we deserve.” (p. 9) After all, this is the definition of The American Dream! So much so that “Americans associate ‘hard work,’ more than any other factor, with ‘getting ahead.’ These ideas lie at the core of our cultural identity,” and indeed, for many Jews and children of immigrants in general, their families’ experiences reflect the potency

of the ideas presented within the American Dream. Their stories legitimize the narrative that anyone who works hard can reach success.

Jews and the Denial of Whiteness. From my experience, another aspect of this problematic thinking is that many Jews-- even those of Eastern European descent-- do not consider themselves to be white.¹ We have vastly different customs and practices; we are still the target of the majority of religion-based hate crimes in the United States² (fbi.gov, 2017); we have been historically targeted by white supremacy groups like the KKK; and many communities have a sort of global/cultural victim mentality from having been ousted or persecuted in their families' countries of origin. Despite these reasons all being legitimate and true, none of them put Jews in the position to be systemically discriminated against in ways that compromise our potential for success, i.e. no one is denying Jews a bank loan or assuming they won't provide good medical care for being Jewish. Ultimately, very few people find themselves in only one independent category of either privilege or disadvantage. Rather, "most people, through the intersecting identities they hold, may experience privilege and penalty simultaneously" (Bell, 2016, p. 12). Those in this position "may focus on [their] subordinated status... and remain unaware of the privileges [they receive]" (ibid). It is true that Jews are seen as "other" in many communities and may very well experience discrimination. But this does not negate the appearance of whiteness and all of the advantages that come along with that.

Denial of the Impact of Slavery. Another genre of comments I've heard people express is that the fact that African Americans were slaves in this country has nothing to do

¹ It's worth noting that 40% of the world's Jews are not white. However, 90% of American Jews are of Eastern European descent. (*The Oncologist* via Wikipedia, retrieved 2013. See *References* for full

² According to the FBI's 2016 Hate Crime report, "Of the 1,584 victims of anti-religious hate crime, 54.4 percent were victims of crimes motivated by their offenders' anti-Jewish bias"

with today's reality. These statements usually sound something like, "Slavery ended such a long time ago! We can't possibly say that it still has an effect on how things are today! You don't think 150 years was enough time to recover??" Aside from the fact that Black Codes and Jim Crow laws essentially prolonged the progress achieved in Emancipation by an additional hundred years, *and* the fact that attitudinal barriers take far longer to change than people seem to think, it cannot be ignored that "a history of slavery originally made it illegal for black families to own property, develop capital, accumulate wealth, and pass assets along to their children-- a practice that has always been available to white families." (Johnson, 2006 p. 7) At first glance, it might not seem clear why this is so significant. But, as discussed further in the Literature Review section, "due to the nature of wealth accumulation, these historic realities have resulted in a legacy that persists to this day." (ibid)

Of course, these types of problematic thinking do not exclusively exist in the Jewish community. After all, we only make up 1.62% of the U.S. population! Considering the magnitude of the racial issues in our country today, the problems of internalized dominance and the troubling allegiance to the "myth of meritocracy" are far more pervasive than just what I've seen on my homefront.

My Own Role in Ignorance. And yet, there is another issue at play here, namely the issue that serves as the true impetus for this work: my own lack of knowledge and ignorance about history. When confronted with comments such as the ones listed above, I knew they were wrong; I knew they ignored our country's dark history, and knew there was so much more to the big picture than was being presented. Yet, I didn't feel that I had enough of my own knowledge of history and socio-economic politics to be able to respond

in an educated way. I was unequipped and unprepared to argue intelligently, and felt ashamed, disempowered, and like I had let my fellow Americans down-- especially those under attack by these judgmental statements. When presented with the opportunity to explore a social studies curriculum of my choice for EDUC517, I decided to remedy this problem and really seek to understand what actually happened after the Civil War. I wanted to discover how history unfolded once slavery was abolished. If life wasn't just happily-ever-after post-Emancipation, then what was it? And *how*?

Where and Who I am Now. At this point in my personal and professional life, social justice and social justice *education* are a top priority. I feel strongly that if more people had the type of historical context that I developed through this curriculum, the history and roots of a systemically unequal society would be clear as day. In this way, I want to use education as a means to “[reconstruct] society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion” by “confronting the ideological frameworks, historical legacies, and institutional patterns and practices that structure social relations unequally” (Bell, 2016, p. 4). Through the curricula we teach, we can “enable individuals to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand the structural features of oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems” so that we can eliminate the type of thinking that ignores our history and consequently lacks context for our present. By humanizing and analyzing the lives and experiences of newly freed slaves in 1863 and beyond, this curriculum attempts to begin to respond to the judgments, misconceptions, and delusions about African American values, work ethic, and history.

Ideas and Theories About Curriculum that Inform My Perspective

This curriculum was created as the final project of Sam Brian's *Geography in the Social Studies* curriculum class. Following the curriculum that was modeled with us in class as well as the outline given to us for completing the project, this curriculum includes many multimodal learning opportunities such as cooking, music, writing, and role-playing. Between the class assignments and the introduction of primary sources to complement the historical fiction, this curriculum is designed to hone and evoke critical analyses of text and content, push students to practice perspective taking, and help them develop an understanding of how the geography and topography of the land affects its residents. This multidimensional aspect of the curriculum helps build students' historical literacies. Nokes (2013, p. 129) explains that "through the creation of multi-genre text sets that include images, fiction, primary sources, picture books, and video or audio clips related to the same topic, teachers can foster historical thinking while differentiating their curriculum."

Of course, Lucy Sprague Mitchell's theories as presented in her work *Young Geographers* (1934) is largely at the core of this take on human geography and social studies learning. In the foreword of the 1991 edition, Sam Brian explains of Lucy Sprague Mitchell's curricular theory that it involves "less reliance of textbooks and more trips; fewer map-skills workbooks and more map making; space on the floor and time in the curriculum for dramatic play" and more (p. xii). So, too, this curriculum attempts to draw upon the inclinations, interests, and strengths of the students to make learning an active, personal experience. The emphasis and focus on people-- a firsthand (albeit fictional) experience as the driving force of the curriculum-- satisfies the idea that "the relationships

involved in human geography spontaneously interest children long before the relationships in locational and traditional geography attract them” (Mitchell, p. 17).

When it comes to teaching history, however, Lucy Sprague Mitchell describes the teacher’s dilemma of “how to build up images of the distant and long-ago which are comparable in vividness and satisfying quality with those gained through immediacy” (p. 18). This is always a challenge, but one answer for how to access an effective level of impact is through the use of historical fiction in place of a traditional textbook.

The Case for Historical Fiction

Building Historical Empathy. Using historical fiction as the primary text of a social studies curriculum has many benefits. Perhaps one of the most salient benefits is its unique efficacy at helping students develop what Nokes (2013) calls *historical empathy*. Unlike textbooks, which focus on the macro implications of a given political event or situation, literature opens up a world of lived feeling that may be lost on students otherwise. Even if the story involves a time, place, or circumstance that is foreign and seemingly unrelatable to contemporary, urban students, the use of a good historical fiction novel can help students “more easily explore the ‘conflicts, sufferings, joys, and despair’ of those who lived before us” (Huck as cited in Freeman & Levstik, 1988). This begins to help us respond to Lucy Sprague Mitchell’s aforementioned concern about not being able to access a vividness of the past that compares with the vividness of firsthand experience. As history teachers, “we cannot take students on a field trip to the past, but we can recreate a sense of history so powerful that students enter imaginatively into the past” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). After all, it is frequently our task as educators to provide some kind of

access into experiences that our students have and will never feel for themselves—often for the better! This makes it incredibly challenging to elicit from students investment and care for the topic, and a great piece of historical fiction can help us bridge that gap.

An Antidote to Homogeneity. Using literature in this way also helps us address the issue of homogeneity that I feel played (and continues to play) such a huge role in the continued ignorance and judgment that many overwhelmingly white environments have towards blacks and other minorities. Getting to know someone’s story—even if fictional—can humanize those from different groups so that their narrative is not monopolized by our disconnected impressions of them, but rather seen as lived, nuanced human experience. Great books can “be used... as windows... showing [students] someone who is different to expand their views” (Bronson, 2017). What’s more, reading about a character of a different race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc., can help students not only “learn to appreciate the differences” but also “learn to appreciate the sameness... so those other cultures are less seen as ‘others’” (Vaunda Micheaux Nelson as cited in Bronson, 2017). This remains true even if the character is from a completely different time period than the reader and helps us understand history through the lens of real human beings deserving of empathy and compassion. Nokes supports this as well, explaining that “reading a novel... can help [students] experience an unfamiliar time or place in a way that [teachers] can’t just tell [them] about” (Nokes, p.120). The ability of historical fiction to “help [us] see the world from other people’s perspectives” allows students to “vicariously experience conditions and events that occurred in distant times and places in a manner that is impossible with textbooks” (Schwebel as cited in Nokes, p. 125).

Making History Personal. At the core of this unique evocative characteristic of historical fiction is its focus on “the human consequences of historical events” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). By telling history through someone’s story, historical fiction novels “present truths that run deeper than historical facts” (Nokes, p. 126). Instead of reading about the political or economic consequences of a historical event, both of which are lost on children who lack the context or experience with which to understand and appreciate them, students are invited and motivated to think about how the event changed the lives of people-- a notion they can far more easily relate to and access. Students at the intermediate age in particular are “more often stirred by an encounter with the human cost of a historical event or crisis than by a delineation of the crisis itself,” and this leads them to have “a more personal encounter with history” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). For students to develop care about a topic and investment in learning it, they need “to see history as significant and relevant” (ibid). Reading, exploring, and processing a strong piece of historical fiction can help students to realize that “people in all times have basic needs in common, and that these needs remain in our time” (ibid). Hopefully this understanding can extend to an understanding that the *effects* of those events remain in our time as well.

Historical Fiction as Inspiration for Historical Research. It’s worth noting that children at the age for which this particular curriculum was intended “are quite concerned with knowing what ‘really happened,’” and will inquire frequently when reading a piece of historical fiction what is real and what is not (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). This evocation of authentic curiosity is exactly what will inspire a great research project. Because “a ‘good story’ will carry more weight than historical accuracy,” it can be used as a tool to get students invested in the content and provide the perfect impetus and motivation to do

historical research (ibid). This way, students can feel moved to find out for themselves what 'really happened' while simultaneously developing historical research skills. In this way, historical fiction novels become "a vehicle to help children develop the skill of distinguishing fact from fiction" instead of being a distraction or detraction from historical accuracy the way some may fear (Freeman & Levstik, 1988).

From Literature to Politics. My hope is that, by building this type of historical empathy, we can lead students to continue caring about history so that eventually, they will see themselves as an extension of that history and not merely an observer of it. Through literature, we can "[provide] young readers with the seeds for later, more mature historical understanding," such as how "progress has sometimes had unforeseen consequences" (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). In this curriculum, for example, this comes into play as we address what exactly *did* happen after the Civil War, and why Emancipation did not necessarily lead to an easier life for freed slaves as many might think. Few people I've spoken to appreciate or recognize the direct correlation between the increase in federal rights given to blacks and the increased violence, hatred, discrimination, and legal tactics states attempted to maintain an unequal, inequitable society. After all, there is a reason we needed the Civil Rights movement and why-- even now-- we need the Black Lives Matter movement. But without the initial investigation and nuanced understandings of how it all began, these connections are lost on students who then grow up to be grown adults with no context for how we got to the world we have today.

Literature as a Transition to Harsh Truths. Many of these lessons can be incredibly difficult to explore, especially when we are raised with great pride in how progressive, free, and egalitarian America supposedly is. It goes without saying that content

needs to be developmentally appropriate, and that not all realities of the world should be shared with all ages. And yet, there are ugly truths about humanity-- and, indeed, about our own country-- that need to be spoken about honestly. Using literature as a vehicle for this delivery also helps to soften the blow to some extent.

Historical fiction “provides a context for understanding and coming to terms with human behavior,” and allows young students to “study and evaluate human behavior in a context that is developmentally appropriate” and that feels more approachable than merely reading about raw facts in a textbook (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). This may be because of the balance literature often strikes between being “a catalogue of inhumanity” at the same time that it “celebrates survivors” (ibid). Great historical fiction can demonstrate human strength, resilience, or insistence on hope in the face of even the most unspeakable adversity and hardship. Literature is incredibly important for its ability to both introduce these challenging realities as well as help students feel that they can approach these hard topics in a way that is digestible.

Historical Fiction as a Vehicle of Social Justice Education.

Counter-narratives. In my research, there were two particular aspects of Social Justice Education (SJE) that jumped out at me regarding the use of historical fiction in the social studies curriculum. The first was the potency of a strong *counter-narrative*. In the fantastic and comprehensive teacher’s guide, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, Lee Anne Bell (2016) describes the strategy of providing students with stories that “unearth suppressed and hidden stories of marginalized groups, including stories of their resistance to the status quo.” Such stories are imperative in helping us “[analyze] and [challenge]

mainstream narratives in law, history, and popular culture that uphold the status quo” of racial inequality (ibid).

In the case of my curriculum, the historical fiction novel is *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl* by Joyce Hansen. In it, we see three different exemplars of change and agency from the very personal to the national. On the micro level, a (fictional) young slave writes about how she allowed her white plantation owners to believe she was “slow,” and that she couldn’t understand them when they instructed her to leave the school room of their South Carolina home. In reality, Patsy was soaking up the lessons and developed a skill—the ability to read and write—that would help her community in immeasurable ways. By doing this, she became the only literate black person on the plantation and was therefore the only go-between from the slave world to the free world, even after Emancipation. She helped her community read the newspaper, which included ads from freed slaves looking to be reunited with family members. When it became clear that the plantation owner’s promise of establishing a school for the workers’ children would not come to fruition, and that the increasing violence in the South turned away the workers of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Patsy stepped up to educate the children of the plantation herself, turning her secret, clever strategy into a springboard for the education of dozens of other freed slaves. Of course, Patsy’s story is fictional, but it challenges the impression that slaves adopted an identity of being helpless, and instead represents a truth about African Americans’ drive and commitment to both educate and become educated after the Civil War.

Stepping back from Patsy herself, we see the many other characters on the plantation with her. When news of Emancipation reached the plantation, one of the only

conditions the freed slaves demanded in addition to the meager pay they received was the establishment of a school for their children. This request came again and again, not heeded by the white plantation owners, but communicating nonetheless how desperately important it was to the newly freed slaves to receive an education. Through their eyes, we see how little changes for them in their daily lives-- how they still work the same hard labor, still live in the same quarters, and still get treated the same way from the white plantation owners. We also see the emergence of pit schools and secret church gatherings in which the freed slaves would sing and cheer and pray for true freedom.

This aspect of the story represents a narrative that is contrary to what many people think of the black community-- that blacks see no value in education, or that they simply don't have the work ethic to be able to succeed. Instead, it shows how hard blacks fought to get an education despite resistance and threats from former Confederate soldiers and their families. Stories like these also challenge the notion that everything miraculously changed after Emancipation and demonstrate how difficult it was for African Americans to make progress in a world where the wealthy whites still controlled their fate by limiting access to progress as much as possible. Through stories like these, we can change society's attitudes towards African Americans by learning of the resilience of soul and spirit they had, displaying courage and heroism from which *everyone* should take inspiration.

However, we also hear, through Patsy's musings, about trouble stirring across the nation-- about "carpetbaggers" being beaten on the road down to help newly freed slaves; about continued maltreatment, imprisonment, and other limitations put on blacks post-Emancipation; and of course, about Lincoln's assassination and the inauguration of Democratic and historically anti-abolitionist president Andrew Johnson. These are all

counter-narratives in their own ways as they challenge the America we were taught existed after the Civil War and challenge the impression that so many people have of their African American neighbors. We also get introduced to attempts at progress such as the Freedmen's Bureau, or the promise of land in Sherman Special Field Order No. 15. We see that there *were* people risking their lives to establish schools and provide aid, even though their attempts were frequently thwarted. Stories like these are important because they "provide evidence as well as hope that oppressive circumstances can change through efforts of human actors" (Bell, 2016, p. 17). The more we teach that individual humans have made a difference, the more we can teach our students to believe that they can make a difference.

Critical consciousness. In his famously influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire explained that, through education, we can teach others to "become aware of the political and social patterns that enforce their oppression, rather than accept [the oppressive] conditions as fated or inevitable" (Freire as cited by Bell, p. 16). This is called developing *critical consciousness*. One of the primary goals of fostering a critical consciousness is to help people "develop awareness or mindfulness of the social and political factors that create oppression" instead of assuming the oppressive circumstances are simply 'how things are and how they'll always be.' (Bell, p. 16) The thought is that "once people begin to question what has previously been taken for granted, the way is open to imagine new possibilities and practices," and they will feel empowered to speak out for those new possibilities (Bell, p. 18).

This is particularly important in an age when "equal opportunity has been presented to us not so much as an ideal, but as an achieved reality" (Johnson, 2006, p. 2).

We need to be raising students to have an educated response to the notion that a history of slavery 'can't possibly' still have an effect on our present reality. As mentioned earlier, many people truly don't understand that the systemic oppression of slavery and post-Civil War politics were and have been cyclical. Without understanding or appreciating what happened after slavery was abolished, it's very difficult to conceptualize how and why the effects of slavery are still present. Although 150 years may seem like an eternity, it's actually a mere speck on the huge timeline of history. This is another concept that becomes much easier to internalize once we look more closely at the years following the Civil War.

Freeman and Levstik (1988) add that, if we, as a society, don't commit to teaching history properly, our children will not "develop a sense of history or of their own place in time." Instead, "their vision is limited to the present by their inability to visualize the past and thus project it onto the future." Children need to grow up knowing that our present cannot be divorced from our past. The first step in raising socially and politically aware future participants in society is to make sure they understand where they fit into the long arc of history, developing a critical consciousness that can help them better critique our nation's systems and habits.

Challenges of Historical Fiction in S.S. Of course, using historical fiction in the social studies curriculum is not without its challenges. For example, "[Seixas'] research [1993] suggests that students have a difficult time distinguishing between fictional accounts that accurately present historical settings and fictional accounts that twist the past to attract modern patrons" (Seixas as cited by Nokes, p. 127). In this way and others, "historical fiction may distort reality" and present fictional details as historical fact (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). It's also important to acknowledge that "reading a novel takes a

great deal of time,” and that “students’ diverse reading abilities and interests make it ‘impossible’ to find historical fiction that is universally appropriate or appealing” (though I feel that many of these concerns can be offset some with guided reading or “book clubs” that differentiate by level and/or interest) (Nokes, p. 127).

Teachers also have to place great care in selecting a novel that will not *deepen* our misunderstandings of marginalized groups. In fact, “many works that have been praised for their literary merit... portray [minorities] in stereotypic ways” and/or are frequently not written by someone from within the community (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). This can lead to perspectives that are inauthentic or give false impressions of the very people whose stories we are trying to honor and give voice to. Finding a compelling and useful piece of historical fiction can also be more or less challenging depending on the particular curriculum at hand, as “a paucity of historical fiction deals with the non-Western world” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). Clearly, teachers choosing a historical fiction novel for their curricula should not do so without care and a critical eye.

Notwithstanding all of the concerns presented above, “a skillful teacher... can accept those limitations and use them as a learning device with children.” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988) For example, students “could be offered a selection of other books” and “chart similarities and differences between portrayals in order to develop a nuanced understanding of the characters being described (ibid).

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, students will also be using the historical fiction as the springboard for academic research. Maps, research, and other primary sources will be a critical pairing to the historical fiction so that students can move “from an emotional response to the narrative to a more analytical stance” about the history (Freeman &

Levstik, 1988). The ability to distinguish fact from fiction is an immeasurably important academic skill that, when guided by a teacher, becomes inextricable from the study of the fiction itself. In addition to the research skills that would arise from the students' desire to pursue the truth within the novel, their "critical thinking skills can be enhanced as the teacher guides students to identify the author's point of view and the conflicting ways to interpret facts" (ibid). It is debatably one of the most valuable skills that students can develop to be able to "discuss the author's purpose, point of view, and possible bias" so that the literature can be contextualized as coming from a human being who has no particular intention of neutrality in that way that the press is supposed to, for example. (ibid)

What's more, these discussions about authors' biases and personal perspectives is imperative not only when analyzing fiction, but in analyzing *all* sources. Textbooks, newspaper articles, and all other sources that claim to share only 'the facts' are *all* influenced by personal perspectives and biases. This is an imperative message to teach students, and historical fiction can be an excellent platform from which to introduce that invaluable life lesson.

Ultimately, the ability of historical fiction to generate historical empathy often surpasses the risk of confusion between fiction and reality. If we can't get students emotionally invested in their learning, we will not be effective, for "without the ability to empathize, to put oneself into the past, history can be a dry and barren ground" (Freeman & Levstik, 1988).

What Environment This is Being Created For

This curriculum is made to be implemented in early middle school classrooms. Specifically, it's intended for schools or teachers that have an active interest in helping students better understand today's problems through an analysis of history. Because my motivation to address this topic came specifically from having been in a very homogeneously white environment, it was created to address information that may otherwise get pegged down in importance (perhaps because of an assumed lack of relevance?). However, it was also designed to acknowledge and celebrate African American heritage and culture and to inspire pride, motivation, and inspiration for young black students as well. Therefore, I've outlined three types of schools that I hope would use the curriculum I've designed.

The "Room for Improvement" School. The school in which I began teaching gave me my inspiration to pursue education. It was a Modern Orthodox yeshiva day school with a large (and growing) liberal demographic. It is a school that is known to be among the most progressive of the NYC Modern Orthodox day schools and has a very strong desire to raise students who are moved to act and do good in the world. Still, the demographic is mixed as far as the sociopolitical values that are represented among the parent body. I was working at this school in 2016, and we were very specifically instructed not to voice any political opinions, before or after the election.

Even among students from liberal families, there is a lack of knowledge about the outside world that always gave me the feeling that there was still a lot of learning to do within the community if this was considered the most liberal of the Orthodox schools in the area. For example, after the Pulse shooting in Orlando, I came in dressed in bright colors,

hoping that I would receive comments on my wardrobe choice so that I could use the opportunity to express my solidarity with the LGBTQ community. On the one hand, students responded to my statement by asking, “What’s LGBTQ?” On the other, I know the school is progressive enough where I could introduce and explain the acronym without fear of backlash from the administration. It is truly a well-meaning school that is moving in the right direction, but the sheltered nature of the more suburban, religious, racially white and largely wealthy community leaves a lot of room for improvement.

In this school, the political “agenda” or implications of the content taught may have to be slightly subtler, lest a financially powerful parent with conservative views become excessively ruffled. Still, there is enough administrative support to come to the defense if a social studies teacher is accused of having an “agenda,” and ultimately the school is one that values moving in the direction of teaching history more honestly than it has been in the past. This type of “rewriting” what is typically taught will still go a long way.

The Liberal, Upper West Side School. Since leaving the school mentioned above, I now work at a different kind of Jewish Day School. This is a Conservative (read: socially and religiously more liberal) day school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Its parent and faculty demographics are both *wholly* liberal: my third and fourth grade students frequently and openly express rejection of our current presidency, attack any hint of judgment or discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality, or gender expression, and have come to school showing photos of themselves at protests like the Women’s March and more.

These values are reflected in the school’s professional development initiatives as well. Two years ago-- before I began working there-- the professional development

initiative was an analysis of gender identity in schools and how to make the environment safer for trans or genderqueer students. This past year, it was a direct response to the political climate and was about reflecting upon and discussing our understandings and experiences with race-- a topic that will be continuing through to next year as well. Among these discussions are attempts at thinking about how we can integrate more conversations about race and visibility of racial diversity in what is largely a very racially homogeneous school. This is a school that wants to inspire students to act and wants to create strong white allies who can be a part of implementing change in the world.

With all of the “right values” in place, this school is still trying to figure out how it can actively teach to the social justice values it wants to exemplify. I feel this would be a great environment for my curriculum because the school would welcome a way to equip its students with knowledge that can help defend members of less privileged communities. This school also wouldn’t shy away from being very explicit about some of the more difficult realities about the challenges regarding race that we face in our country.

The Racially Diverse and/or Majority Minority School. Throughout the making of this curriculum, I definitely had an intention of building a critical consciousness despite not having had the language to describe it as such at the time of the project. I wanted to be able to provide African American students with the knowledge of their people’s history here so that they can feel empowered in understanding the chain of events that might help to explain some of the circumstances they may experience in their day to day lives. If they know and understand what happened post-Emancipation-- how complicated each attempted step towards progress was-- then perhaps they can have better context for the complicated realities of the country we have today.

The themes of education throughout the curriculum are also in response to minority students who feel shut out of their own schooling and/or who grow disinterested in school due to a lack of visibility or the schools' lack of funds to properly care for and nurture their students' lives and education. In particular, I wanted to empower and inspire African American students with stories of role models and counternarratives that represent the strength, tenacity, and bravery that they have in their heritage without belaboring the typical examples of MLK Jr. and Rosa Parks. These role models fought for their rights to education, specifically. They went from having been systematically deprived of an education to becoming some of the most powerful literary voices our country has. My favorite aspect of these role models-- both those who truly existed, such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, as well as the fictional character in the historical fiction novel used in the curriculum-- is that they all found ways to get what they wanted in a world that tried very hard to keep them from getting it. Some used clever tactics to "trick" the system or rise up quietly and sneakily while others simply worked with superhuman-like drive to defy the odds. These are the stories I would want my African American students to hear so that they, too, can learn that, if we know the right "games" to play and how to play them, success can be attainable for them, too.

Ultimately, it is my goal to empower *all* students with knowledge and context of history and how it affects life today.

Part Two: Development Rationale

Intended Audience

This curriculum was designed for an early middle school classroom, fifth or sixth grade. While a short Age/Rational section was included as part of the original curriculum outline, this section will be a more thorough investigation of the early adolescent age group. As “a period of rapid physiological, psychological, and social change,” adolescents need learning opportunities that meet them at their level (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 1998). While adolescents are experiencing change in essentially every aspect of their lives, from the physical to the spiritual, this section focuses on the developments in the intellectual, social-emotional, and moral realms as those are the areas that inspire this curriculum.

Developmental Characteristics of the Intended Audience

Intellectual Development and Learning Style. Kuhn (2009) explains that “early adolescence is regarded as an auspicious time for the development of [inquiry] skills.” Students of this age are “growing increasingly more critical in their analysis of information” (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 1998). They are beginning to see “relationships among similar concepts, ideas, and experiences and makes inferences” and move “from concrete thinking to abstract thinking” (Piaget, 1950 as cited in Salyers & McKee, 2009). Manning (2002) echoes this sentiment by explaining that children in this stage in life are “acquiring the ability to develop and test hypotheses, analyze and synthesize data, grapple with complex concepts, and think reflectively (as cited in Caskey & Anfara, 2014). This is in part

due to “a growth spurt... in the prefrontal context, which is the part of the brain where information synthesis takes place” (Salyers & McKee, 2009).

Because of their newfound ability to engage in “independent, critical thinking” and the fact that they “possess a vivid imagination,” students at the young adolescent age “often pose broad, unanswerable questions about life and refuse to accept trivial responses from adults” (Kellough & Kellough, 2008 as cited by Caskey & Anfara 2014; Salyers & McKee 2009). In this way, “they seek... opportunities to engage in activities that have inherent value” and “learn best through interaction and activity rather than by listening.” (Salyers & McKee, 2009)

Psychosocial and Emotional Development. Adolescence is infamous for its complex emotional shifts. Students at this age “are constantly trying to manage their social worlds” while they “grapple with their own changing thoughts and feelings” (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 1998). It’s a complex task, to say the least. The adolescent student “desires social acceptance” while she “searches for the answer to ‘Who am I?’” (Salyers & McKee, 2009) Indeed, “identity formation is one of the most prominent developmental tasks” of adolescence as they “search for an adult identity and adult acceptance” while they simultaneously “strive to maintain peer approval” (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 1998; Kellough & Kellough, 2008 as cited by Caskey & Anfara, 2014) This back and forth between personal exploration and social navigation begets a needs for “personal reflection and observation of oneself in relation to others,” an experience that should be nurtured and coached towards healthy development by older role models such as teachers (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 1998).

Development of Morals, Ethics, and Values. Due to their expanding cognitive development, adolescents at this age develop “an increased awareness of alternatives” and are curious about the outside world (Kuhn, 2009). Particularly with the increase in social media and personal technology, the outside world is closer to our young teens than it ever has been in the past. To process their “intense curiosity about the world,” learners at this age “build upon their individual experiences and prior knowledge” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Piaget 1960 as cited by Salyers & McKee, 2009) They are in a state of “transition from a self-centered perspective to considering the rights and feelings of others” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014), so it becomes “a time of life when young people are forming values” (Salyers & McKee, 2009).

This is why it is the perfect age group with which to begin to delve deeply into the historical empathy aspect of learning and help them grow up to be compassionate, sociopolitically engaged adults. Students at this age “tend to be idealistic and possess a strong sense of fairness” which leads to their feeling “vulnerable to social inequities [and] concerned for oppressed groups” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014; Salyers & McKee 2009). Young adolescents are now “capable of ‘higher levels of moral reasoning,’” and are thus newly able “to view moral issues in shades of gray rather than only in black and white” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). This allows for the type of critical thinking that a strong social studies curriculum demands while simultaneously evoking the sense of emotion and passion that will turn history into reality.

How the Curriculum Responds to the Traits Above

This age group is clearly very special and completely unlike any other time in life. It is because of this “uniqueness in terms of intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development” that they “need educational programs that are designed specifically for their age group” (Salyers & McKee, 2009). Additionally, “this is a most impressionable age, which places additional responsibility on middle grades educators” to make an impact that will be lasting and meaningful (ibid). This curriculum attempts to meet these unique and newly developing interests and skills with every decision, from the content to the research activities.

Meeting Intellectual Needs. Caskey and Anfara (2014) explain that, “to foster intellectual development, these youth need to interact directly with their world... through discourse and hands-on experience.” As we see from well-known practices in literature classrooms, novels create an ideal platform for the discussion of opinions, interpretations, analyses, and critiques of texts and ideas alike. Particularly as it pertains to historical fiction, students will have a springboard for debate and discourse regarding the history itself. Because the text offers a personal perspective, the thoughts presented in the novel lend themselves far more easily to disagreement or concurrence than would a textbook, which presents information in a presumed objective fashion that can cause students to feel shut out of conversation.

“Another strategy” to encourage and promote adolescent students’ intellectual development “is to build lessons using inquiry or problem-based learning in which students are encouraged to ask questions that interest them” (Salyers & McKee, 2009). This, too, is a prominent feature of the curriculum as it is a natural result of investigating a

piece of historical fiction. The study of literature provides countless opportunities to ask students questions such as “What do you think she should do? What would you do? What would happen if...” and beyond. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, students naturally feel moved to ask, “*Did this really happen?*” This curriculum harnesses this inspired curiosity as those very questions become the bases for all of the students’ research.

Additionally, one of the most prominent activities described in the curriculum asks students to mirror Patsy’s diary entries by having a journal of their own in which they would keep track of, develop, and express their thoughts on the themes and ideas learned in class. The act of “writing reflectively every day” serves as “another strategy to strengthen connections in the brain,” as it “gives time for students to consolidate learning and seek meaning between various activities” (Salyers & McKee, 2009). This type of reflection might be very new for students, and may feel uncomfortable for many at the start. However, once students see that this journal is not graded for grammar or spelling, they can grow accustomed to the invaluable habit of reflecting through journaling in a safe way and feel guided by Patsy’s diary as a model.

Tapping into Their Emotions. Salyers and McKee (2009) explain that, when it comes to the adolescent learner, “engaging... emotions will increase student attention span and heighten memory.” As mentioned in an earlier section, one of the main reasons for using historical fiction within the social studies curriculum is to make the human impact of the time come to life, evoking an emotional response to the circumstances in an authentic way. Using a narrative as the anchoring text of the curriculum is also beneficial because “story presents history in a subjective form that is closer to the way in which young children explain themselves and understand the world” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). I feel

that with history education, the content is so often stripped of its emotional reality despite time periods like slavery and Reconstruction having been overwrought with emotion. Teachers must be able to tap into that emotion if they want their students to be invested in the work that they produce.

Within the resources in the curriculum are poems and songs from the time that help students connect the events of the time with the emotional impact they left. Additionally, I know that one of the most emotionally impactful resources I found in my development of the curriculum were the real family advertisements from newspapers as well as the slave database from the Library of Congress. Ultimately, these stories are not fiction; they are not make-believe. This *is* a story of real people, and through the analysis of primary resources in addition to the historical fiction narrative, this curriculum is designed to match the emotional intensity and developing sense of empathy of the young adolescent audience.

Moral Maturation and Abstract Concepts. Another positive aspect of using a novel as the cornerstone of the curriculum is that story “provides a safe context for the exploration of ‘the extremes of human behavior’... that seem to be an important concern of older elementary students” (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). Adolescents’ growing knowledge of the outside world causes them to realize that real pain exists in life. They begin to understand that the world is not perfectly just, and that, consequently, there is still quite a bit of room for improvement despite some of the sociopolitical gains we’ve made in the last fifty years. It is for this reason that “teachers need to plan curricula around real life concepts” in which students can “examine moral dilemmas and contemplate responses” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014)

To this, it is helpful that “during early adolescence, youth develop the capacity for abstract thought processes” (Piaget, 1952, 1960 as cited by Caskey & Anfara, 2014). This curriculum explores many of these larger, more abstract concepts that are so important to explore and that may have been beyond students prior to this age. Just the novel alone eloquently and accessibly explores mature, meaningful ideas such as the value of knowing one’s ancestral story, the universal human desire to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, what it’s like to transcend others’ expectations (as well as one’s own!), the immeasurable importance of education, and of course, what it really means to be “free.” The opportunities to connect with these topics not only pique the interest of students of this age, they actually “help young adolescents to develop values, resolve problems, and set their own behavior standards” (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Although adolescents are “still strongly dependent upon parental values,” school can be one of the best places to explore issues of ethics because, “as adult role models, teachers can guide young adolescents to connect intellectual thought and moral reasoning” (Salyers & McKee, 2009; Caskey & Anfara, 2014).

Identity Formation. As mentioned in the *Developmental Characteristics of the Intended Audience* section, identity formation is one of the paramount and emotionally charged tasks of adolescence. This is often a destabilizing undertaking, one that leaves many adolescents feeling that their “personal problems, experiences, and feeling are unique to [them]” (Salyers & McKee, 2009). However, “teachers can provide educative experiences such as role-playing, drama, and reading that foster identity formation” (Caskey and Anfara, 2014). For example, through the role-playing of temporarily taking on a slave’s identity, students can explore what aspects of the story they’re telling resonate

with them and which feel unknown. This can help these young learners develop the language to describe their feelings and experiences, even through a story as foreign to them as these would be.

Of course, it's no accident that Patsy, the main character of the historical fiction novel, is exploring her own identity throughout the novel as well. She has grown up being told that she is less intelligent and less capable than her peers, even though she does not feel this way about herself. She is also one of few slaves on the plantation who does not know her parents, know what their story is, or know where they are. Patsy expresses a deep desire to "know her story," and feels she has an incomplete picture of who she is for her lack of knowledge about her history.

As the story progresses, Patsy begins to assert the person she feels she is; she discloses her ability to read and write, exposing an intelligence, cunning, and capability no one thought she had. The plantation workers name her "Little Teacher" when she stepped in to teach children and adults alike to read, marking a new chapter in her identity and role in her social sphere. Finally, towards the end of the book, Patsy decides to create a new name for herself instead of carrying the name given to her as a slave. She calls herself Phillis Frederick, after the inspirational American writers and former slaves, Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass. This declaration of identity is empowering and comforting, a sign to readers that despite feeling alone and out of place, one can become strong, self-assured, and proud of who one is. Patsy's story shows that people from all backgrounds, all time periods, and all circumstances need to go through stages of questioning and searching before they understand who they really are. In this way and many more, "these [educational] experiences can help young adolescents realize that their

challenges are not unique,” and that they, too, will feel more at peace with and proud of themselves in time (Caskey & Anfara, 2014).

Part Three: Lit Review

My whole inspiration for creating this curriculum was my own lack of knowledge on the subject of the Civil War and its aftermath. As shameful and embarrassing as it is, I don't even think I could have told you in what year Emancipation happened prior to completing this work. Every aspect of the curriculum needed to be researched and studied as if for the first time-- and indeed, it may very well have been the first time, or at least the first time I was really paying attention. Certainly, it was the first time I understood why it mattered.

The Curriculum Itself

A Promise of Land. Among the discoveries I made while creating this curriculum was the promise-- and eventual revocation of the promise-- of land for freed slaves in Sherman Special Field Order No. 15. This was a situation I had only even heard about through the historical fiction novel I chose. As would be the case with my students, I found myself saying, “What actually happened here??” This was the origin of the “forty acres and a mule” promise, which indeed rung a bell in my memory of having been taught in middle or high school. Of course, as with many of President Johnson's undoings of progress for the blacks, this promise of land went nowhere and the tens of thousands of slaves who thought they had somewhere to go were forced to return to the plantations on which they worked during slavery.

The Multimodal Aspects of the Curriculum. In searching for a role-playing opportunity for the curriculum that wouldn't a) undermine the seriousness of the topic or b) legitimize any semblance of debate on the topic of slavery, I found hundreds of narratives from real slaves via the Library of Congress's database and Wikipedia's *List of Slaves* in which some people's articles have more information than others based on records available. The Library of Congress also has a plethora of primary sources from this time, such as newspaper ads of slaves seeking family members from which they were separated. This was a powerful discovery for me personally, and gave me resources to use in the curriculum so that this topic might become a real thing that happened to real human beings-- real people with real families and real suffering-- instead of merely existing within the context of a history class.

I also sought opportunities to include different genres and modalities of learning by celebrating some of the elements of African American life at the time of the Civil War. Two cultural spheres that noticeably appear in the novel were music-- African American spirituals, specifically-- and cooking. The title of the novel itself is taken from the words of an African American spiritual that was sung in the secret religious gatherings held by slaves that inspired hope, strength, and joy even in the face of adversity and oppression. In researching the crucial role slaves played in the food of the south, I also discovered how deeply impactful Africans were on United States cuisine. So many staples of our diet that we take as a given are only here because the African slaves were wise and forward-thinking enough to bring with them the seeds and agricultural skills they had honed in their countries of origin. Foods such as yams, coffee, rice, peanuts, watermelon and *more* only became part of our national cuisine because of the awful injustice of displacing people from

their homes and bringing them here for our benefit. These contributions and so many others go unnoticed and unacknowledged, but through research, we can properly celebrate African American culture and contributions to our way of life.

Education for Freed Slaves. Perhaps the largest area of research I did in order to create the curriculum itself was about education for freed slaves following Emancipation. This, too, was propelled by the novel's emphasis on the strong desire for education felt by the African Americans living on the plantation. For example, I learned about the Freedmen's Bureau, which, in addition to providing food and medical attention to millions of people, was also the first government organization to establish schools for newly freed slaves. Upon examining the response of the Freedmen's Bureau, we quickly see the vehemently opposed stance of the white southerners that led to the violent-- and sometimes murderous-- acts against "carpetbaggers and scalawags," northern whites who traveled south in an attempt to help found schools and educate southern African Americans. The success of the Freedmen's Bureau was, of course, stunted by lack of funding and support, but its impact began a new chapter in the lives of African Americans during Reconstruction.

What's even more amazing and awe-inspiring when studying how the southern blacks became literate is not just seeing what the white people in power could do for them, but rather seeing how dedicated they were in seeking out their education on their own. During slavery and Reconstruction, many African Americans found "sneaky" ways of learning to read and write through pit schools, in hiding, or by outsmarting the white people around them. Frederick Douglass is perhaps the most famous of these real-life examples. In his famous memoir, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, we read

accounts of how he tricked white people on the street into giving him literacy lessons by provoking them, teasing them about knowing more than they did and allowing them to “prove him wrong.” (Douglass, 1845) Of course, we also have the accounts of Booker T. Washington, who traveled on foot for weeks and worked tirelessly to put himself through school upon being freed as a child.

These stories are counter-narratives that exist in our country’s history, and of course, there are many more than just Washington and Douglass to name as inspirational and artistic heroes of their time. I discovered poets such as Phillis Wheatley, the first black author ever published, who wrote and published her first book of poems long before slavery was abolished. The more we, as teachers in our classrooms, know about these names and the mind-blowingly inspirational stories that accompany them, the more we will be able to teach our students that the desire of the African Americans to become educated and successful was burning with passion, dedication, and hard work.

Social and Political Resistance to Progress. Of course, as the slaves gained freedom and support, “the system of racism evolved to create new ways to segregate and discriminate” (Johnson, 2006). It is far from coincidence that the KKK began immediately following the end of the Civil War. Their primary intention was to undo the political progress and protection being given to freed slaves via intimidation, threats, and violence against both black and white civilians and politicians who supported the more progressive laws being passed (History.com Staff, 2009). When we take a step back, we see that each time the United States moved towards racial progress-- such as after World War I when the U.S. saw a huge influx of immigration, the Great Depression that bred even more resentment from the extreme poverty people faced, or in the 1950s and ‘60s during the

civil rights movement-- there is a resurgence of Klan activity (Getchell, 2018). It is only when discrimination crept its way into the law with Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws that the KKK settled down some in the 1860s and '70s.

Knowledge of the Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws is a huge aspect of responding intelligently to anyone who might argue that the end of slavery was the end of systemic oppression of blacks in the U.S.. Black Codes made it so that freed slaves had to sign yearly contracts for nearly no pay or risk being arrested and having to work for free-- essentially keeping their status as slaves, but with a different name. In addition to limiting black rights, freedoms, and activity, these codes even threatened to punish any white employee who offered higher wages to blacks. Between the aggression of the KKK and the passing of Black Codes, "By 1877... blacks had seen little improvement in their economic and social status, and the vigorous efforts of white supremacist forces throughout the region had undone the political gains they had made" (History.com Staff, 2010). Eventually, Jim Crow Laws created a system in which white lawmakers and enforcers could finally keep blacks separate from white life for the next one hundred years.

When we think about how black schools lost the majority of their funding at the crumble of the Freedmen's Bureau, and then consider that blacks were forced to only attend schools for black children until the late 1960's, the picture becomes more and more clear as to how the history of slavery directly affects the African American community well into the twentieth century. Suddenly, Emancipation becomes not an event that occurred "long ago" in 1863, but a long and arduous process that kept going until the end of the 1960s and is still not quite resolved today. According to a number of studies, including the research cited by the New York Times Op-Ed, *The Unmet Promise of Equality*, "In many

ways, things have gotten no better — or have gotten worse — since 1968.” Segregated housing districts-- reinforced by cyclical patterns of wealth alluded to earlier and discussed more fully in the Literature Review section-- have perpetuated the existence of segregated, unequally funded schools throughout the country. Herein lies the crux of my work: the only response to the ignorant but widely held view that our history of slavery has no impact on today’s unequal circumstances is to know and understand the cycle of discrimination that *followed* Emancipation, even in historically “liberal” states in the North and, indeed, even in the year 2018.

The “Problem Mentality”

The Myth of Meritocracy, the Cycles of Wealth, and the Denial of Both. As is always the case, we need to understand where an issue comes from in order to truly be able to respond to it. Therefore, in addition to researching the historical content of the curriculum, I also took a deeper look into the problematic mentality that pushed me to want to research this topic.

One of the primary resources I used to understand our country’s state of mind is Heather Beth Johnson’s book, *The American Dream and the Power of Wealth: Choosing Schools and Inheriting Wealth in the Land of Opportunity*. It begins abruptly and directly: “The wealth gap between white and black families in the United States is increasing, not decreasing” (2006, p. 1). Johnson goes on to address the shock that this statement causes her students, explaining that they “have been told their whole lives that everything is getting better, not worse, where race and class inequality is concerned” (ibid). Between messages they received either implicitly or explicitly-- in schools, from movies, or maybe

from what their parents or grandparents experienced-- her students “have grown up believing that the general principles of equal opportunity, egalitarianism, and inclusiveness are the basis for how our system operates” (ibid). Indeed, this notion of equal opportunity-- of the United States being *the* land of equal opportunity-- is one that runs deep within many of our psyches and impressions of our country. It is the fundamental principle of *The American Dream*-- that notion that “an individual rises and falls based on personal achievement or lack thereof; that one’s background or family of origin is neither a significant help nor hindrance in the quest for success; and that each of us earns and deserves our relative societal positioning” (p. 2).

Johnson’s mission in this book was to interview both black and white families earning “middle class” salaries and ask them about the following topics: (a) What is the American Dream? Do you believe in it? (b) What school does your child/children attend? How did you arrive at the decision of where to send them? (c) What kinds of monetary gifts/help, if any, has come from parents or grandparents? And (d) How do your experience reflect or not reflect the American Dream of meritocracy? Her overall findings based on these interviews confirmed that many families hold onto the American Dream strongly and believe that if a person works hard enough, they can reach success. What her interviews revealed, however, was that white middle-class families have access to many more options/opportunities compared to black middle-class families-- *even those earning the same salary as their white counterparts*-- because of monetary gifts or help the white families’ parents and grandparents were able to give them.

For example, white middle-class families might have easier access to purchasing a home in a ‘good school district’ because their parents are more likely to be able to give

them the down payment, despite their not having the money for the payment themselves. By contrast, black families-- even those who could theoretically pay the mortgage on a comparable house in the neighborhood whose schools they would prefer their children to go to-- can't buy the home because no one is helping them with that down payment. In fact, for many black families, funds are flowing in the opposite direction compared to white families; whereas in white families, money generally gets transferred from the oldest generation down to the youngest ones, many black families are often supporting their parents and/or grandparents in addition to supporting themselves and their children. This makes it so that the same amount of money when comparing annual income side-by-side gets stretched to support several more people, with no help from parents or other family members along the way (Johnson, 2006, chapter 3).

Perhaps most the most striking aspect of Johnson's interviews was the fact that many white families did not realize or see the contradiction between the belief in a meritocracy and the help they had received along the way through gifts or inheritances-- assets that are inherently not "earned through hard work." The shocking and sobering reality is that "forty percent of impoverished adults hold at least one job." Contrary to what the American Dream suggests and what so many Americans believe, "many of these families have worked hard, they have played by the rules, and they are still coming up short" (p. 4).

As mentioned earlier, this vicious cycle has roots in the history of slavery as black families were systemically prevented from accumulating the kind of intergenerationally held wealth that makes all the difference for white families. And, "since wealth-holding families have always tended to pass significant portions of their assets along to the next

generation, the disparities have escalated over time” (p.7). The side-by-side comparisons are shocking: “less than 8% of black families receive any inheritance, compared to over 28% of white families.” Additionally, “the median inheritances for blacks is less than \$1,000, while it is approximately \$10,000 or more for whites” (p. 8).

There are many people who would argue that this doesn't matter-- that hard work and dedication surpass the potential advantages that come with family-held wealth. But the truth is that “wealth gives parents the capacity to provide stable homeownership, safer neighborhood environments, better educational experiences, and more expansive opportunities to their children,” and that's not even taking more subtle advantages into account, such as extra-curricular experiences, AP classes, or paid professional development opportunities that affect factors like college admissions or acceptance into certain programs (p. 8). When we stop to consider the cycle of advantage, it becomes increasingly clear that “structural wealth inequality creates advantages for children that are often unearned through individual accomplishment or merit” to the point where it should be obvious that “some people have advantages that others do not” (p. 9). It makes me wonder what those of us who are committed to the notion of a meritocracy would say if they knew that “parental wealth is the strongest predictor of racial differences in net worth,” *not* ‘hard work’ (p. 8).

We need to stop telling ourselves and teaching our children that the playing field is equal. This fallacy is at the core of the ignorance I've confronted in family and community members, and causes judgment and self-validation to run rampant in white communities while blacks and other minorities continue to believe that if they or their families are not succeeding, it is a product of their own doing.

Addressing our ideology around the “myth of meritocracy” is “a critical component in understanding how race and class inequalities are perpetuated in the contemporary United States” (p. 3). This is because “ideology-- in how it helps to mask and justify systems of inequality-- contributes to the collective denial and thus maintenance, of structural inequalities” (ibid). A loyal belief in a meritocracy blatantly ignores the advantages that white middle- and upper- class families have had for as long as this country has been in existence. It continues to encourage us to deny the lasting effects of slavery on the circumstances we face today, and therefore keeps us from addressing the systemic inequalities that continuously hold us back from true progress. Ultimately, “our beliefs and our actions-- what we think and what we do-- will impact the extent to which we perpetuate historic dilemmas into the future” (p. 4). By having a greater and deeper acknowledgement of the issues at play, we can see our society’s problems more honestly and more effectively dismantle the system of oppression.

Understanding the Problem Through Social Justice Pedagogy.

In addition to taking a deeper look into the “problem mentality” that directly mirrors the arguments that triggered this work, I also wanted to look more closely at the issue from a social justice theory lens. According to Lee Anne Bell (2016), “social justice refers to reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion.” This resonated with my inspiration towards not only creating this curriculum specifically, but with my reason for entering the field of education in general.

Hegemony and a Normalized Mentality. As we’ve already seen, knowledge and understanding play an enormous role in the maintenance of oppressive and inequitable

systems. Part of the larger issue we're facing in our country today is that the "myth of meritocracy" has become part of our national *hegemonic narrative*. Hegemony is not only a matter of who the president is or what type of political system is in place. Rather, "hegemony is also maintained through 'discourse,' which includes ideas... and ideology" (Bell, 2016, p. 11). Our hegemonic discourse has created a national mentality in which cyclical "advantage and disadvantage come to be assumed as natural, normal, 'business as usual,' even by those who are disempowered" (Bell, p. 10). People across *all* groups come to believe that '*this is just the way things are,*' which leads marginalized groups towards internalized self-blame, low self-image, and little hope that things can be different while "material or other advantages of whites as a group are normalized and justified as fair and deserved" (p. 11).

This thinking is "woven so effectively into the social fabric, [that] the processes and efforts of oppression become normalized" (p. 10). After all, the American Dream of a true meritocracy is "a national creed for which we are known throughout the world," so it makes sense that we have come to take its reasoning as truth (Johnson, 2006, p. 9). It is because of the innocuous nature of this creed that we come up against its danger. Power does not always operate through a visible dictatorship that all can recognize as harsh and unfair. Instead, "power operates... through ongoing systems that are mediated by *well-intentioned people* acting, usually unconsciously, as agents of oppression by merely going about their daily lives" (Bell, 2016, p. 10). We were raised to believe that race inequality was a thing of the past, but the truth is that "oppression is never complete; it is always open to challenge, as is evident if we understand history" (Bell, 2016, p. 16). My attempt here is

to help others see this continued work we have to do through understanding history and through the naming of the poor national habits we've developed.

Internalization and Internalized Dominance. As mentioned above, these repeated narratives cause “members of a society [to] appropriate and internalize social norms and beliefs” (Bell, 2016, p. 11). What's interesting is that people don't do this just because they've been told to (implicitly or explicitly). They do it “to make meaning of their experiences” (ibid). We grow up in our society noticing differences of circumstance, of wealth, of societal positioning; perhaps at one point or another, we even stopped to ask ourselves, our parents, or our teachers why these differences exist. Having a narrative that explains simply that those who work hard become successful, and that those who haven't found success just haven't worked hard enough satisfies a discomfort and a wondering that would perpetually nag at us otherwise. A more honest and accurate response would force us to a) have to *know* the truth and b) confront that truth. It would force us to confront the inequalities that still exist in a country that takes so much pride in its supposed 'equal opportunity for all,' and so instead, we explain the realities before us with a message that validates the experiences and 'deserving efforts' of the dominant group. Intentionally or not, when we find “a white person who insists that anyone who works hard can get ahead, without acknowledging the barriers of racism, [they are] consciously or unconsciously expressing internalized dominance” (Bell, pg. 12) .

It is through this “internalized domination [that] individuals in the advantaged group learn to look at themselves, others, and the broader society through a distorted lens in which the structural privileges they enjoy and the cultural practices of their group are taken to be universal, superior, and deserved” (Bell, p. 12). No one wants to be a part of an

oppressive system, and few people would be willing to admit that they benefit from a system that affords them privileges that others cannot enjoy for reasons that are completely out of their control. The 'better' alternative thus becomes the acceptance and internalization that lived circumstances simply reflect how things are meant to be. Of course, for most people this thinking is unconscious and even runs in contrast to the values they would say they hold. This makes the undoing of this complex web of thinking all the more difficult to name, discuss, and address.

Conclusion

It can feel overwhelming and discouraging to step back and see how complicated and arduous a task it will be to slowly go chipping away at these problematic, internalized mentalities that perpetuate a system of inequality, only a fraction of which have been named here. However, knowing how to name these phenomena can help us recognize them when we see them and work to undo them little by little. For me, it all starts with understanding our history-- taking a look at what happened after the Civil War, what laws came into play during Reconstruction that stunted progress, and how we got to the America we face today. The black community, and specifically the African American community, deserves so much more acknowledgement, empathy, and generosity of spirit than we, as a society, currently give them-- and I say that acknowledging that it might truly be the understatement of the century. The least we can do is acknowledge the inequity of inherited wealth, homeownership, and education options; acknowledge the pain and disadvantage they have experienced, historically and presently, at the advantage of the white dominant group; acknowledge the everyday injustices and the everyday hard work,

neither of which are acknowledged by the general public; and acknowledge the heroism that exists within both the African American heritage as well as in the day to day life of trying to fight against the grain of how our society functions.

My hope is that, through education and curricula designed to help students develop the critical analytical skills they'll need to critique our sociopolitical systems as adults, and that seek to inform students of the truths that were kept out of my textbooks or were overlooked when I was growing up, we can start to undo the inequitable mindsets and systems that confront our society today.

Application

I, myself, have not yet had the opportunity to use this curriculum in a classroom. As a result, my knowledge is limited concerning what works and doesn't work when put into practice. With that said, teachers *must* take into account their audience when teaching this curriculum. The types of discussions one must be prepared to have will vary greatly depending on the backgrounds of the students, how much knowledge they may be coming in with, and how personally some of these themes may hit the students and their families.

It's also worth noting explicitly that, while this work has its roots in the inequalities of today, *the curriculum itself does not, in any way, address those issues*. This is a curriculum about life for slaves during and immediately after the Civil War. It is only meant to serve as an educational basis for students to draw upon to be better informed about our history if and when they are confronted with the types of comments I encountered. If it is the desire of the teacher to be explicit in drawing the connections between post-Emancipation sociopolitics and today's conditions, those aspects would need to be brought in separately (and expanded into other years/curricula as well).

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Appendix: The Curriculum

Life After the Civil War

A fifth-sixth grade Social Studies curriculum
by Debbie Nehmad

EDUC 517
Sam Brian
Spring 2017

Description of Age Group

This curriculum was designed with my current group of sixth graders in mind. They are a class of eleven and twelve year old students at a Jewish independent school in Riverdale, New York. It is a dual-curriculum school in which students learn Judaic Studies, largely taught in Hebrew, for half the day. By middle school, academic expectations of students from both the teacher and the parent body are incredibly high, and most students are involved in some form of extra-curricular activity in addition to their schoolwork.

The racial and economic demographic is rather homogenous: all of my students are white (though not everyone considers Jews of European descent to be white) and, for the most part, come from affluent homes. In many ways, this homogenous environment has left them unaware of cultural and economic circumstances that differ from their own. They almost all attend Jewish summer camps and have a strong sense of community that generally revolves around their school and their families' synagogue. However, due to their expanding cognitive development, they have "an increased awareness of alternatives" and are curious about the outside world. (Kuhn, 161) In my experience, all conversations about race, class, war, and social politics have been insightful, reflective, and fruitful. It should be noted, though, that while this curriculum was designed based off of what I know about my own sixth grade students, it was also created with a more racially diverse student body in mind so that the curriculum might also translate into a public school setting.

Adolescence is almost universally referred to as "a period of rapid physiological, psychological, and social change." (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 20) Students are constantly trying to manage their social worlds, grapple with their own changing thoughts and feelings, and grow increasingly more critical in their analysis of information. Kuhn writes that "early

adolescence is regarded as an auspicious time for the development of [inquiry] skills,” and the ever-critical eye that many adolescents employ should be nurtured and used in constructive ways within school curricula. (168)

Rationale for Curriculum

The development of this curriculum was inspired largely by a gap that I’ve experienced throughout not only my own education, but also those of my peers and my students. Particularly because the Jewish community is one that a) has an identity that is deeply embedded in a history of constant persecution and b) has seen much professional and economic success in the United States, it is not uncommon to hear arguments that compare the Jewish community to the African American community in asking the rhetorical (and painfully ignorant) question, “If the Jews could pull themselves out of poverty, why can't the blacks?” This disposition is both pervasive and completely devoid of a sense of history, and this curriculum seeks to ensure that my students would have a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the experiences of African Americans after the abolition of slavery.

At first glance, it may seem like a curriculum about slavery and life for African Americans post-Civil War would have little relevance to affluent, Jewish sixth graders. However, healthy development in adolescence “involves personal reflection and observation of oneself in relation to others.” (Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson, 20) Through the use of historical fiction, students will be introduced to an adolescent girl who, despite having grown up as a slave on a South Carolina plantation, experiences many struggles that they, as adolescents, grapple with as well. For example, our protagonist muses throughout the book about the struggles of understanding who she is in light of the fact that she doesn't know her family. She is often

underestimated by her peers and superiors, but eventually becomes appreciated as an intelligent and talented leader within her community. Swanson, Spencer, and Peterson explain that “identity formation is one of the most prominent developmental tasks” of adolescence, and the plight of finding one’s place and one’s voice is sure to be relevant to most any adolescent student. (ibid)

In order to assist in the students’ connection to the experience of our protagonist and the population she represents, the curriculum involves many activities of identification with the African American community. For example, they will explore various slaves’ biographies as they take on a persona to represent to the class, discover that many staples of their diet were introduced to America by African slaves, and learn that education was considered of utmost importance to the slaves and newly freed African Americans as the best way to ensure social and political power. If the primary goal of the curriculum is to help students understand a marginalized community’s history (and thus the current circumstances that community faces as well), several activities that involve the students jumping into the lives of the people we study must be present throughout the curriculum. After all, “most humans come to know their social world, not through text, but through experience.” (Johnson, 47)

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Historical Fiction

The historical fiction novel I selected is a book from the *Dear America* series, *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl* by Joyce Hansen. The story is told from the point of view of Patsy, an eleven or twelve year old black girl in 1865 who is given a diary in jest by her master's niece and nephew. Both the white family whose plantation she works on as well as her fellow black slaves believe Patsy to be far less intelligent than she is in reality, mostly because she both speaks with a stutter and walks with a limp. However, Patsy secretly learned to read and write by sneakily position herself in the room where the kids would receive their lessons each time their teacher came, and uses the journal as her only friend and outlet on the plantation.

The story takes place immediately after the Civil War has ended. I felt it was a great selection for a curriculum on Life After the Civil War because Patsy herself muses in her writings about what it means to be free if she and all of the other "hands" in the plantation were living the same way they had prior to abolition. The main themes of the book are about education-- how important it was to the black slaves for their children to learn to read and write, how much Patsy loves to read and write and craves going to school-- and knowing oneself and one's story. Patsy does not know her parents, and as her fellow blacks begin to reconnect with their families in the aftermath of the war, she wonders who her family is and what that means about who she is. Both of these are topics rich and relevant enough to middle schoolers to be able to truly delve into on a personal level as well as exploring what some of the big questions the slaves faced post-war were. On a more individual level, Patsy is also clearly misunderstood and underestimated by her peers and the various adults in her life. This is a feeling that most any

adolescent can empathize with, and the experience of waiting to be recognized is poignantly relevant.

At the end of the book, Patsy chooses her own first and last name and becomes Phillis Frederick, after Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass, both of whom taught themselves how to write like she did. By the end of the book, Patsy's talents for reading and writing are made clear to her fellow blacks. She not only earns their respect, but becomes a vital member of their community as the only one who could read the newspaper "*The South Carolina Leader*" at their weekly Union League meetings. Through these roles and her eventual role as the teacher of the plantation's children, Patsy finds her voice and herself. This, too, allows for a strong connection between the students and the story, as it inspires us to recognize that everyone has something to offer, and that sometimes it just takes time until our role in our community becomes clear and tangible. In the epilogue, the author finishes Phillis' (Patsy's) story in a black-purchased-and-owned village called Libertyville in Abbeville, SC. While I believe Libertyville itself is a fictional place, it's certainly based on what many freed blacks did once they had the means to do so and opens another route for exploration within the curriculum.

Ideally, this book would be read as a read-aloud in reading groups to promote a more intimate dynamic for discussion. Throughout the story, many important historical and political events are mentioned such as Abraham Lincoln's assassination, the Black Convention in November of 1865, Black Codes, and much more. The book also contains many primary sources in the back such as photographs from the Reconstruction era, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, African-American spirituals (sheet music and lyrics) mentioned in Patsy's diary, and even a recipe referenced in the story from Sarah Josepha Hale's 1841 cookbook, "The Good Housekeeper." (It helps that Hale was one of the first American female

novelists and one of the first writers to write about and speak out against slavery.) Thus, the novel is rich with jumping-off points for discussion, reflection, investigation, creativity, and learning.

Research

The central theme of the historical fiction selection, as well as of this curriculum, is the theme of education of slaves and the newly-freed black community. It was very common for states to have laws that prohibited the teaching of slaves to read and write, as well as laws that would harshly punish slaves for gathering to learn or engaging in the acts of reading and writing. However, after the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, these laws were null and void as the black population was enslaved no longer. Both the African American community as well as many religious groups and civil rights organizations such as the Freedmen's Bureau recognized the importance of educating the black population, and the establishment of a public education system in Southern states for both African Americans and for the community at large was a top priority. While this is considered by many to be "the most significant achievement of the entire Reconstruction era," the road there was far from simple. (Worth, 2006) Educators from the North who traveled South to teach were threatened or attacked by opposers in the South, and many schooling projects struggled for funding, resources, and acceptance.

Today, education is frequently still looked upon as the path with the most potential to help us achieve social, political, and economic equality among races in America. Therefore, the classwide research project I chose was that of investigating what education looked like for the newly-freed blacks in the South. The sources include stories from Booker T. Washington, who was born into slavery, freed at age nine, and began to learn how to read and write shortly thereafter. From his autobiography, we see two excerpts about his educational career-- one from when he was a newly-freed child, and another from when he is older, trying to enroll in University. The personal account not only shows a desperate desire to obtain an education, but

also demonstrates the struggle and sacrifice it took to get there, even after emancipation. (The students and I would, of course, make sure to discuss who Booker T. Washington was and the immeasurably significant role he played in the African American community and in the Civil Rights Movement.)

This topic is one that is immediately tangible for and relevant to sixth grade students. Being that school constitutes the vast majority of their awake hours, I imagine it will strike many of them to see the emphasis placed on education during slavery and in the wake of freedom. It is not an obvious thing for sixth graders, many of whom have already begun to resent school and struggle to understand its value, that education would be first on the former slaves' to-do lists. My hope is that, through the connection to this curriculum and research topic, student will gain an increased sense of value for their own education and begin to understand its role in the many power dynamics that have existed from the beginning of our country's establishment through today.

Attached are a few **sample** resources for the class to use to delve into this topic.

Independent research projects for the students might include:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| -Booker T. Washington | -Project on Port Royal |
| -Frederick Douglass | -Phillis Wheatley |
| -Slave Code of South Carolina 1740 | -Role of religious life in black ed. |
| -“Pitschools” | -Segregation |
| -Freedmen’s Bureau and “carpetbaggers” | -Black Codes |

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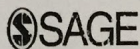
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1



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desegregation process. In *Brown II*, the U.S. Supreme Court delegated the task of carrying out the desegregation to district courts. It set forth guidelines that placed the primary responsibility for evaluating and resolving any problem that could arise as the result of the implementation of the desegregation of public schools on the districts themselves. The district court was also charged with considering the adequacy of the desegregation plans and to stimulate the transition to a racially nondiscriminatory school system. During this period of transition, the courts retained jurisdiction of the cases. Thus, district courts were given the responsibility to determine whether districts were in fact making good faith efforts at school desegregation.

Postscript

Although the *Brown* and *Brown II* decisions stipulated that separate schools were not equal and that school districts were to desegregate, the ruling did not lead to immediate attempts at desegregation. *Brown* and *Brown II* did not stipulate the implementation of specific desegregation plans nor a time table in which these desegregation plans would be realized. Even though *Brown II* stipulated that schools were to be desegregated with all deliberate speed, it did not stipulate a date by which schools had to be desegregated and did not give any provisions for how this school desegregation would be achieved.

After *Brown II*, uncertainty about when and how to desegregate continued for many years. School desegregation did not come swiftly or easily. Eighteen southern states adopted resolutions of interposition declaring *Brown* illegitimate, denied the U.S. Supreme Court's power to outlaw segregation, and enacted legislation designed to thwart any efforts toward desegregation. Southern judges refused to enforce the law of *Brown* by upholding statutes that were clearly designed to evade *Brown*. As late as 1964, only 0.48% of African American elementary and secondary school students in the South (excluding Texas and Tennessee) attended schools with Whites. If the U.S. Supreme Court justices had known that there was such a lack of public support for desegregation, they might have added stipulations for enforcing desegregation to *Brown* and *Brown II*.

The *Brown* case ruled that desegregation was necessary for African American students to have access to material opportunities afforded to White students and to preserve the socioemotional well-being of African American children. However, it was not until almost 11 years after the original *Brown* decision that a dent was made in desegregation efforts. When Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, billions of dollars became available for public school districts. This money was also available for desegregation efforts.

Shelly Lynne Brown-Jeffy

See also *Bolling v. Sharpe*; *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*; Desegregation; *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*; Resegregation; *Roberts v. City of Boston*

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BUREAU OF REFUGEES, FREEDMEN, AND ABANDONED LANDS

Established on March 3, 1865, by the Freedmen's Bureau Act, The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, better known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was sanctioned as an agency to provide social uplift to approximately 4 million newly freed African Americans released from the bondage of enslavement. With the adoption of the

Thirteenth Amendment (1865), the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the pending Fourteenth Amendment (1868), the Freedmen's Bureau had seven responsibilities: the relief of physical suffering, the overseeing of the beginnings of free labor, the buying and selling of land, the establishment of schools, the paying of bounties, the administration of justice, and the financing of all the activities. The education of African Americans was perhaps its greatest accomplishment. This entry provides an overview of the bureau's work, takes a closer look at its role in education, and assesses its other accomplishments.

Organizational Overview

The Freedmen's Bureau functioned fully from 1865 to 1868 and in part until the end of 1869. Its original commission was for 1 year, yet in 1866—and over a presidential veto—Congress extended the life of the agency and increased its powers.

Organized under the War Department, the Freedmen's Bureau divided former Confederate States into 10 military districts. It was headed by Major General Oliver Otis Howard, who was appointed by President Andrew Johnson at the behest of the Senate. Howard oversaw these districts and attempted to distribute the acres of abandoned and confiscated land to freedmen and women, but was met with great resistance. Howard, a gregarious and charitable commissioner, convinced Congress to divide former plantations into small parcels of 40-acre units that would be awarded to freed people, but President Johnson undermined the Freedmen's Bureau by pardoning former Confederate planters, restoring their land and status in 1866. At this point, freed people lost access to lands, and the Freedmen's Bureau lost access to its primary source of funding. With these events and the lack of funding, weak organization of the internal structure, and opposition from conservatives, the Freedmen's Bureau had very little impact on freed people during the era of Reconstruction (1865–1876).

Of the seven responsibilities of the bureau, some were fulfilled more completely than others. One of the more successful initiatives of the bureau was its ability to relieve the suffering of destitute African Americans and Whites. After the Civil War (1861–1865), many African American and White

Southerners found themselves homeless and/or without the ability to support themselves. The bureau, despite its limited funding, sought to alleviate some of the suffering of these Southerners by providing them with food rations, clothing, blankets, and temporary housing. Tens of thousands of rations were distributed across the South in the hopes of relieving the temporary hardships of African American and White Southerners following the Civil War.

Leadership in Education

The greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau, however, was the establishing of schools for African Americans. In the South, establishing free schools for African Americans and free elementary education among all people faced great opposition. Although the agency never instructed a single freed person, its presence assisted in consolidating and furthering some of the earliest postbellum educational opportunities for freed people. The bureau gave the educational opportunities of freed people a greater degree of organization by consolidating—to the best of its ability—the school initiatives of the various benevolent associations, freed people, and assenting local Whites.

According to historian Clifford Ganus Jr., the bureau attempted to organize and support the multiple groups associated with African American schooling throughout the South. In early years, the bureau provided transportation for schoolteachers of freed people; paid for salaries, books, and other learning aids; and secured additional teaching space by buying or renting property from assenting landowning Whites. The bureau also provided financial incentives essential to expanding the number of schools that could be offered in both the immediate areas of Union occupation and the more rural and nonbureau and nonmilitary sanctioned areas of the state. Accordingly, the bureau's combined efforts established a consolidated system of tuition-free grassroots schooling opportunities for African Americans throughout the South. By 1870, more than 9,500 teachers, with the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau, taught nearly 250,000 pupils in more than 4,300 schools.

Free schools for African Americans gained the attention of benevolent agencies such as the American Missionary Association, which built

schools and identified White philanthropists. Private freedmen's aid societies provided teachers and their salaries, buildings, and supplies. By the end of 1865, more than 90,000 freed people were enrolled as students in public schools. By 1871, 11 colleges and universities and 61 normal schools—for the training of teachers—had been founded. Universities such as Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Howard University, Talladega College, and Fisk University were among these. According to W. E. B. Du Bois, \$6 million were expended in 5 years for educational work, \$750,000 of which came from formerly enslaved Africans themselves.

Nonetheless, White Southerners fought to keep African Americans ignorant and uneducated, deeming educated African Americans to be dangerous. In addition to opposing African American education directly, they fought to keep liberal White philanthropists and businessmen (who they called carpetbaggers) out of the South. These groups possessed the potential to undermine overt and subversive movements to reestablish the order of the Old South.

Other Efforts

The most confounding and least successful component of the Freedmen's Bureau's work was its ability to judicially protect the rights and livelihoods of formerly enslaved Africans. Former bondsmen were intimidated, beaten, raped, and killed by revengeful Whites. From this, a polemic dialectic was fostered. Although the bureau's courts were venues where Whites were punished because of the mistreatment of African Americans, state courts were institutions for perpetuating the order of the Old South. These courts sought to reduce African Americans to bondsmen once more while the bureau's court sought to put African Americans on equal grounds with Whites.

The Freedmen's Bureau initiated a system of free labor, established the African American peasant proprietor, secured the recognition of African American freemen in courts of law, and served as the founder, financier, and consolidator of the free public school in the South. On the other hand, it failed to address the debasing and mortifying White response to emancipation and the personal and professional advancements of freed people, and it did not establish good race relations between

the White Southern planter class and their former bondsmen and women.

Similarly, because it was ill equipped and understaffed, it failed to guard its work from paternalistic methods that discouraged autonomy and was unable to create African Americans landholders in any considerable numbers. Its good fortune was due to industriousness—Northern White liberals and dedicated African Americans. Any failures resulted from insufficient federal support, poor management, and the sheer difficulty of the tasks.

Christopher M. Span and Maurice J. Hobson

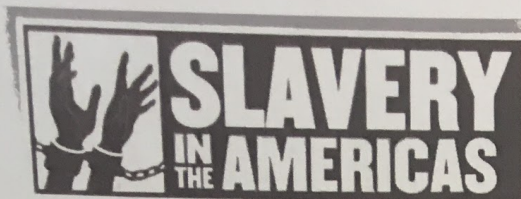
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BUSING

Busing is the term used to describe a process in which school districts used altered school bus routes to facilitate the racial desegregation of public schools in the United States. Segregated housing patterns, whether de jure or de facto in older cities, made genuine attempts to implement court-ordered desegregation in neighborhood public schools difficult. In many cities (both northern and southern), African American and White children were displaced to accommodate desegregation. Whites, who were willing to tolerate the presence of African Americans, could not fathom the transporting of their children out of their segregated neighborhoods to make room for the influx of African American children. This entry looks first at the context of busing in terms of the landmark desegregation orders and the wave of opposition to them. Then, it examines busing programs in several key cities and concludes with court decisions that for all intents and purposes ended busing and led to the resegregation of schools.



African Americans during Reconstruction

Richard Worth



Philip Schwarz, Ph.D., *General Editor*

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*African Americans
during Reconstruction*



Richard Worth

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Sharecropping

African Americans wanted to buy or rent their own land, but white planters did not favor renting land to African Americans. Whites favored the gang system. Under this system, groups of African-American laborers, called *gangs*, worked the plantations and were paid in cash or with a share of the crop. However, African Americans did not like this system. It was too much like slavery, when gangs had been run by white overseers (supervisors). These overseers continued to direct the gangs on the plantations after the end of the Civil War. In addition, the gang system rewarded all workers equally, whether or not they had done an equal share of the work.

Eventually, whites and African Americans reached a compromise, called *sharecropping*. African-American families worked plots of land which were owned by the plantation owners. In return, the black families received a share of the crop that they harvested. This might be as much as one-third to one-half of the crop. The bigger the crop, the more the sharecroppers received. Sharecropping became widespread throughout the South during Reconstruction. While it was better than slavery, nevertheless, most African Americans were denied the opportunity to own any of their own land.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Many historians believe that the most significant achievement of the entire Reconstruction era was setting up a broad public school system in the South. The education system was supported by money from state taxes. No such system devoted to educating white and black children had existed before 1867.



This engraving from 1866 shows black women being trained to make clothing at the Freedman's Union Industrial School in Richmond, Virginia.

Over the next decade, more and more children in the South attended school. By the early 1870s, most children in Texas were going to school. About 50 percent of white and black children in Mississippi, Florida, and South Carolina were in the classrooms.

African Americans recognized the importance of education. Unless they could read, blacks could not understand the voting ballots. As a result, they might be tricked by white Southerners into voting for the wrong candidates. African-American sharecroppers also signed contracts with white plantation owners. These contracts spelled out the size of the crops that the black farmers received. One black woman said

she wanted to read "so that the Rebs ["rebels," or Confederates] can't cheat me."

Not only young people but adults went to schools to get an education. One observer noted that "six years and sixty may be seen side by side, learning to read from the same chart or book." Some classes were very large, with as many as 100 students. But African Americans did not care that the classrooms were crowded because they wanted to learn to read. Many children walked several miles to attend school. A member of the Freedmen's Bureau recalled, "At daylight in Winter, many of the pupils in the sparsely populated country places leave their home breakfastless for the school-house, five, six, or seven miles away." One teacher added that she had a student who walked miles to school every day and then went home and "taught his mother and two sisters all he has learned as we went along."

While many schools were built by states and local communities, others were financed by donations from African Americans. Black churches also built many schools. The American Methodist Episcopal Church ran several thousand schools in the South. As one observer said, "The Church and its schools were supported entirely by its members."

EDUCATING TEACHERS

Many of the teachers in these schools were white men and women who came from the North. But African Americans also wanted black instructors for their children. These black teachers presented positive role models. In the past, African

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**N. B. FOREST,
DEALER IN SLAVES,
No. 87 Adams-st, Memphis, Ten.,**

 **HAS** just received from North Carolina, twenty-five likely young negroes, to which he desires to call the attention of purchasers.  He will be in the regular receipt of negroes from North and South Carolina every month. His Negro Depot is one of the most complete and commodious establishments of the kind in the Southern country, and his regulations exact and systematic, cleanliness, neatness and comfort being strictly observed and enforced. His aim is to furnish to customers A. 1 servants and field hands, sound and perfect in body and mind. Negroes taken on commission. Jan 21

Memphis slave dealer Nathan Bedford Forrest became an outstanding Confederate general and one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan. *The Bettmann Archive*

intact family. The Africans created the extended family.

Ignorance was another tool used in the battle to turn the captives into slaves. When it was discovered how easily the Africans learned, and how eager they were to do so, laws were created forbidding anyone to teach an African to read.

"On Sundays," relates a woman once held in bondage, "I have seen the Negroes up in the country going away under large oaks, and in secret places, sitting in the woods with spelling books."

Charity Bower, interviewed by Lydia Maria Child, 1848

Africans understood that being able to read gave them abilities that the owners did not want them to have, but they took the chance of being punished as they read by candlelight at night or took whatever books they could find into the forests. The planters certainly did not want the Africans thinking about ideas of freedom and equality, ideas that their own sons and daughters were exploring in school. They didn't want them to read newspaper articles about the debates in Congress over the expansion of slavery, or to realize how many white Americans thought Africans should be free. Nor did they want them to read about other Africans who were free in Northern states, or who had escaped to Canada.

It's difficult to tell just how many Africans were brought into North America, for few accurate records remain. Most historians believe that somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 men, women, and children were taken from Africa and brought to North America between 1620 and 1808. This does not include the thousands who died on the ships or those killed during the kidnaping process. No records were kept of the thousands of Africans illegally brought to North America after 1808. When the ships carrying Africans could not outrun the navy ships that challenged them, they tried to destroy the evidence by simply throwing their human cargo overboard. It is estimated that only 10 percent of all the African captives were brought to the area that became the United States. The rest were taken to the Caribbean and South America.

Eventually, most of those who were held captive had been

Shenandoah Valley to work among the freedmen.

The first school for Africans in the upper valley was set up at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The school was attended at first by nineteen poorly dressed, poorly disciplined young children desperately needing the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The children had never held a book before, had never been inside a classroom. White opposition to the school was immediate, and often violent. Teachers were hooted at and sometimes stoned as they went about town. They slept on floors and in the homes of friends. Often there wasn't enough to eat, and there were never enough supplies. This report in *The Missionary Helper*, a periodical published by the Freewill Baptists, describes the scene:

Jan. 2, 1867, the first Free Baptist church was organized in the Shenandoah Valley at Martinsburg. One never to be forgotten morning a few months later the Lord said to me, "Arise and build." I took the message joyfully and told the people I was sure if we did our best the Lord would supply all needed help. The colored people were living in log-cabins, cellar-kitchens, poor, with small wages. Looking on the human side it seemed certainly impossible to accomplish such a task, as all building material was at that time very expensive. On the heavenward side all as bright as the noonday sun. At Christmas we had \$60.

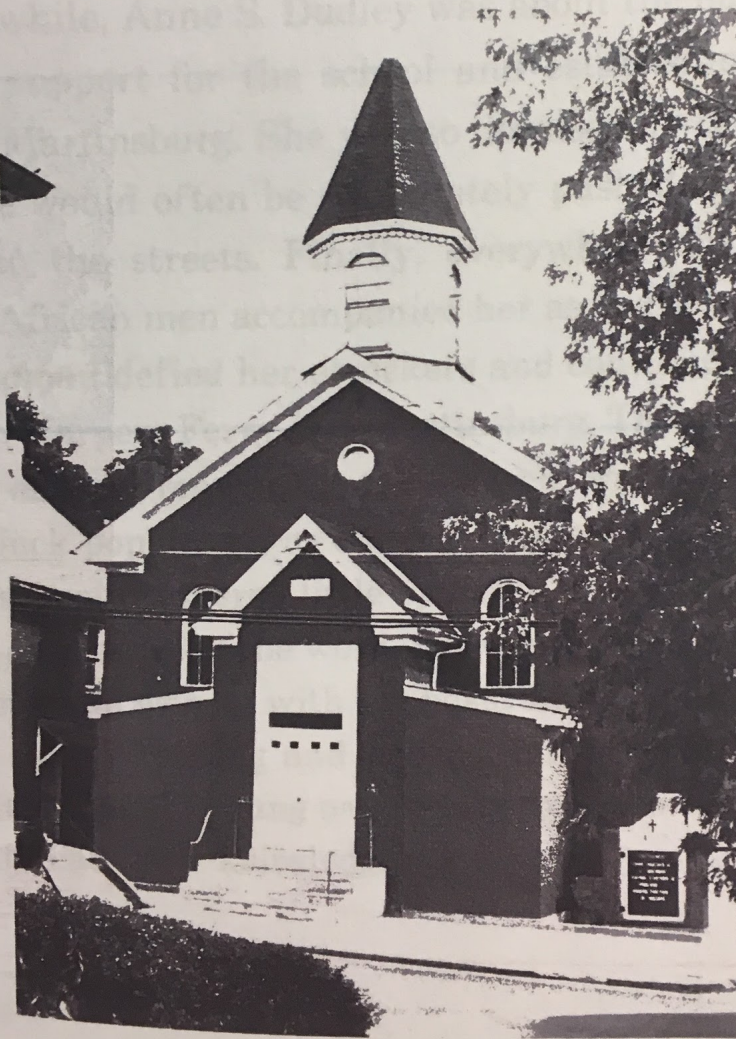
I was teaching in an old log-barn, with a row of shelves around the walls for writing, benches without backs, boards for extra seats, as long as there was room. Day and evening schools and meetings were in constant session, with the single exception of one night in a month. The room was always crowded to its utmost capacity.

In 1867 a philanthropist, John Storer of Phillips, Maine,

promised \$10,000—a great deal of money in those days—to expand the school. The Baptists would have to raise a similar amount to receive Storer's grant.

The Freewill Baptist Woman's Missionary Society solicited help from a sympathetic General Howard, collected nickels and

Dudley Baptist Church today. *Author*



dimes from New England children, and begged prominent people throughout the country. Finally the money was raised and Storer College was established.

The Reverend Nathan Cook Brackett was the first head of the small school. He would devote most of the rest of his life to the cause of education for the Africans at Harpers Ferry.

Meanwhile, Anne S. Dudley was about the business of maintaining support for the school and establishing a church in nearby Martinsburg. She was so despised by the local citizens that she would often be deliberately pushed off the sidewalks and into the streets. Finally, everywhere she went several sturdy African men accompanied her as bodyguards. The feisty little woman defied her attackers and continued her efforts to build in Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg. The church, officially known as the Freewill Baptist Church, was known among the local black population as Dudley Baptist.

The school prospered little by little. It was not a "college" in the modern sense of the word, but was devoted to providing the freedmen and women with the basic tools of education. At first it was simply reading and writing, but later Storer became a school that taught young people to become teachers so that they could spread their knowledge.

Facing page, top: Storer College. Harpers Ferry State Park Archives
Bottom: Storer College today. Author





Students and teachers of early Storer College. *Harpers Ferry State Park Archives*

The Missionary Helper of May 1878 described it this way:

In addition to the number of regular teachers that Storer has sent to the many places, but for them, there would be none to go, there is a class of transient pupils who count the few weeks spent here the happiest of their lives. Inside these walls scores have learned to read and write . . . and to cast off shackles that will never more bind them, for what is more cruel than the bondage of ignorance?

Frederick Douglass, who had once been held in captivity in West Virginia, was interested in the school and delivered a

graduation speech, pointing out, among other things, that the college had been established at Harpers Ferry, the site of John Brown's raid on the arsenal years earlier. One of the young women in the first classes at Storer was little Louisa Jackson, who had been only four years old when John Brown raided the arsenal. She would later marry Lucas Dennis, the brother of my great-grandmother Dolly Dennis.

By 1874 David Hunter Strother noted in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* that the school was like any other he had seen.

The room will accommodate a hundred and thirty pupils, with seats and desks, and in winter is always full to overflowing. In summer the attendance is reduced one half, owing to the necessity of the older pupils going out to service, or engaging in remunerative labor of some sort. The children were of both sexes, ranging from three to twenty years of age, neatly and comfortably clad, well fed, healthy, and cheerful, with an uncommon array of agreeable and intelligent countenances peering over the tops of desks. They were also remarkably docile, orderly, and well mannered, without a trace of the barbaric squalor and rudeness pertaining to the street-corner brat of former days, occasionally found nowadays among those who don't go to school.

The Union Army, which had protected the rights of Africans after the war, discontinued its occupation of the South in 1867. The Freedmen's Bureau stayed in operation for a while longer, but soon it, too, was discontinued. Black people in the South were on their own for the first time.

Geography

At various points in our book, Patsy tells us of former slaves being granted land “out on the islands.” But without a sense of South Carolina’s geography, students will have no idea which islands the literature is referring to and how near or far they are from our characters’ lives. This will be the eventual platform for our mapping and geography section as it applies to the curriculum, but before a discussion of the South Carolina Sea Islands, the class will have explored geography with the use of a terrain model.

Using teacher-guided simulation and this 3-D model, the class would explore the physics of rain as it falls over a mountain range, floods land depressions to create lakes, and runs down the mountain sides to form a river system. Geographical vocabulary, including words like river, lake, mouth, bay, inlet, strait, mountain, ridge, peak, valley, pass, butte, isthmus, peninsula, island, archipelago, and more would be up on the board and read through prior to the simulation and given meaning as we explore the terrain. Eventually, the terrain model will be flooded so that the landforms themselves go from being funny looking mountains to independent islands. Students will be able to watch that transition happen and develop a better understanding of how landforms turn into what we call them today and clear up common misconceptions (like that islands are landforms that float on the ocean).

The next step would be for students to draw their own two-dimensional map of the terrain model, complete with varying symbols to indicate significant points of reference on the map (such as mountain peaks or the mountain ridges), a compass rose, an alphanumeric grid, and a scale of miles. This way, students have an intimate knowledge of the terrain that’s represented on their maps and can better grasp a lesson of how to use the grid, scale of miles, etc, as the tools they are. By the time we explore a map of the South Carolina Sea Islands, students

will have a deeper understanding of what those islands *are*, their geographical relationship to the mainland (i.e. That these are barrier islands just off the coast), and how to understand what the map displays within a concrete, tangible context.

Once we were ready to bring our mapping skills to our story, we would look at several maps to analyze the question of how a slave from the Davis Hall Plantation in Mars Bluff, Florence County, SC would get to Charleston to access a) the Black Convention at Zion church in 1865 and b) the Sea Islands that many slaves began traveling towards as a result of the Sherman Special Field Order No. 15, which was later revoked. The series of activities created for this section is quite comprehensive in the skills and analyses it will require students to engage in. The first uses a map of South Carolina that displays the counties along with the rivers and lakes of the state. Students will be asked to first analyze the distance and geography of South Carolina in how it relates to the route from Florence county to Charleston. The next map displays the railroads that existed as of 1860. Students will consider new travel alternatives with the addition of human innovation but also reflect on how access to travel was different for slaves compared to free whites. Finally, we will “arrive” at Charleston with a map that displays the surrounding Sea Islands. There are two versions of the map: one is a modern, drawn diagram of some the coast of SC, and the other is a reprint of an original drawing from 1861 by A. Williams & Co. courtesy of the Library of Congress website. Students will be asked to compare the maps and reflect on whether or not they felt the artists had done a good job (mostly just to marvel at their talent during a time of minimal technology!). They will then count the number of islands they see between Charleston and Savannah, GA, and explain how they think one would access those islands considering what they know about rivers, straits, etc. The final question students would have to use what they know about the features of an island to consider why the government

would have been willing to give the islands as land for the newly freed African Americans. All maps and worksheets are attached in the following pages.

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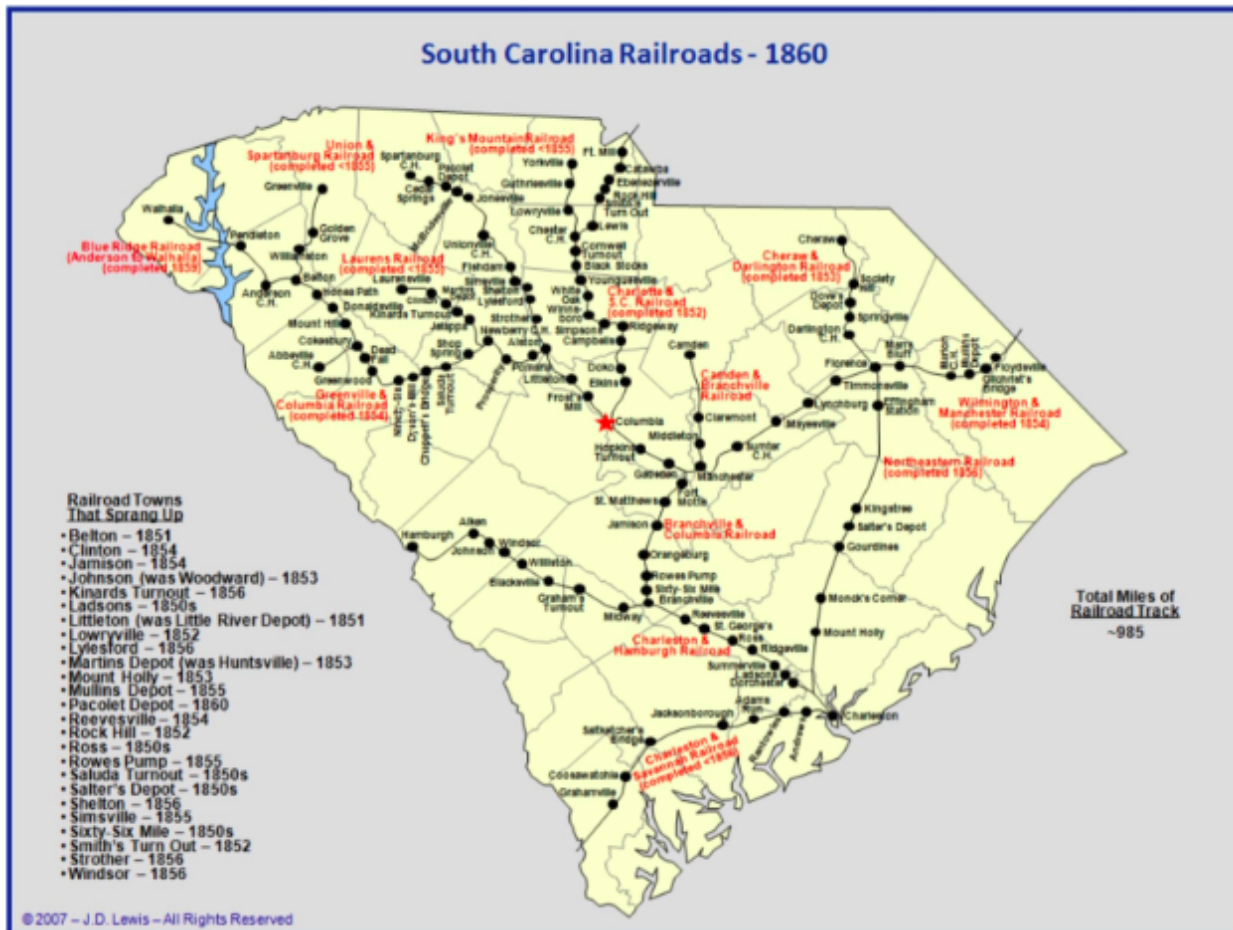
Name: _____ Partner's name: _____

Map 1



1. Find and circle both Florence county and Charleston on the map (Hint: the Charleston we want is the one that's further south)
2. How many miles is it from Florence to Charleston? _____
3. What geographical features (mountains, rivers, etc.) would you have to consider if you were traveling from Florence to Charleston? Be specific and name them if you can!

Map 2



1. How might this map change your travel plans? Highlight the route you would take and explain. _____

2. As a slave or newly freed African American, what would you need in order to take this route? _____

3. What would you do if you couldn't get those things? _____

Map 3-A and 3-B



3-A:

1. Compare this modern diagram of the South Carolina coast with Map 3-B. What year is Map 3-B from? _____
2. Before they had the mapping technology we have today, artists were in charge of making maps. That means that Map 3-B was hand drawn! Do you think the artist did a good job representing the coastline of South Carolina? Explain why you think so.



Map 3-B

3. How many islands do you count between Charleston and Savannah, Georgia?

4. Consider what you know about the bodies of water that surrounds the islands. What kind of boat do you think they would need to get to the islands? Why?

5. ****Bonus question:**** Why do you think the government would have been willing to give these islands to the newly freed African Americans? _____

Role Play

One of the most exceptional resources discovered through the creation of this curriculum was the Slave Narrative Project accessed through the Library of Congress website. As I searched the web for more slave narratives, I found that there are many lists of slaves with information about their lives, from the famous leaders like Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass to everyday, average slaves whose stories generally remain untold.

This role play exercise would involve each student randomly selecting or being randomly assigned a slave's narrative. Some slaves' lives might seem "commonplace," while others might have a defining moment, such as attempting to sue for their freedom. The goal of this project would be to honor the lives of the slaves whose names are buried within these databases, and also to show that there were *many* forms of heroism within the slave community, from runaways to lawsuits to even just pushing through in hopes of seeing a better future for their children.

Students would receive their identity with resources on where to find out about their lives and write up a few paragraphs as a first-person introduction of themselves to the class. (As a way to add some momentum to the "introductions" and avoid students becoming restless, this may take the form of a "speed-dating" session in which students have 2-3 minutes to describe themselves as their slave identities to a classmate before moving on to the next person.) The last element of this project would be for students to vote as a class on which of the narratives they heard they'd like to recreate as a short dramatic play, which would be written and acted out by the students themselves.

Resources for Slave Narratives

- Library of Congress, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

- Wikipedia, *List of Slaves*. (This is a comprehensive list of slaves from all around the world in various time periods, but includes many that were brought to the U.S. and often uses the Library of Congress narratives as its source)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_slaves

Creative Writing

As we read *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly*, I would like for my students to keep a running journal of their own. Our protagonist, Patsy, keeps a journal as her confidant and affectionately begins each entry with, “Dear friend.” Thanks to her (albeit fictional) record keeping, we have an account of what it was like to be a slave/newly freed worker at the end of the Civil War. Our journaling project is going to be a project that will emphasize the importance of having first-hand accounts. I might frame the assignment by saying, “Thanks to Patsy, we know what it’s like to be a slave. Now, I want to know what it’s like to be *you*.” They would keep a running journal that would be collected at the end of each week, mostly so that I could a) make sure the assignment were being completed; b) make sure they understand the assignment and how a journal works; c) have a way to access their lives and thoughts to whatever extent they’re willing to share them as a way to know my students more deeply and keep my eyes out for any problematic situations that may have been written into the journals.

As a way to help the students develop a personal attachment to their journals and encourage them to use them, I would ideally want my class and I to make our own journals using basic bookbinding instructions. This is a fun craft activity that would connect the class to a centuries-old practice, and hopefully instill a sense of pride in the resulting books waiting to be filled.

In and of itself, journaling is an excellent practice in both reflection and expression. It also allows for a relief from the specific and burdensome rules of grammar and spelling, which might discourage students with weaker academic skills from practicing their writing. Students will not be graded based on spelling, grammar, or even language. This is an opportunity for them to express themselves purely, and is a fantastic way to validate and celebrate any language

dialects present. Validating language variations is an important part of valuing all cultures-- and *communicating* a value of all cultures-- that is absent all too often in academic settings. At the end of the year or unit, we would have our completed journals as takeaways from this long-term project. I would also ask the students to select a few representative entries (one for each month, or a “beginning-middle-end” type of selection) so that they might see some differences between the beginning and the end and so that we might be able to display our entries in the classroom.

Primary Source

While I hope to incorporate many primary sources into the curriculum (see attached), the ones I feel have the most “meat” in relation to the historical fiction novel I selected are excerpts and accounts from slaves who taught themselves how to read and write. The jumping-off point for this idea was an excerpt from the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, written of course by Frederick Douglass himself. In this excerpt, Douglass describes his clever use of deductive reasoning to learn a few letters. More interesting, however, is the fact that he also describes the way he tricked many white folk into giving him reading and writing lessons by challenging them to prove they knew more than he did. By relying on the assumptions of the Whites around him that he was far less intelligent than they, he turned the tables around and used them to push himself and his education forward.

This is especially relevant in relation to our story because Patsy, the main character in our historical fiction novel, also plays dumb in order to learn to read and write. Describing her tactic, she writes in her diary, “I’d make sure I was dusting in Master’s library where Annie and Charles were with their teacher. I’d dust very slowly, so I could hear how they learned to read and write... Then I’d make believe I was too fool to leave the room when I finished dusting and sit on the rug near the door and stare blankly as if I didn’t know my own name.” (Hansen, 1997) In “Patsy’s” words, “the more [she] played the dunce, the more [she] learned.”

With the class, we would compare the two characters’ methods of learning, for they’re quite different from one another: Patsy plays dumb to her masters’ while Douglass asserted his intelligence in order to provoke a response. Still, what ties both characters’ stories together is that they each found a way to discreetly and slyly trick the powerful Whites around them into teaching them the one thing they feared the slaves learning more than anything else. I love this as

part of the curriculum because hearing about these stories of empowered blacks who believed they could push themselves forward helps abate the potential of communicating an exclusively victimized identity that can sometimes result from a focus on slavery.

These sources would be brought to the students at some point in our reading of the novel, as some of the central questions that will arise are “Why do the freed blacks feel it’s so important to ensure their children get a school on the plantation?”; “Why does Patsy make such effort to learn to read and write?”; and, ultimately, “Why did the Whites make it illegal for slaves to learn to read and write?” On a deeper level, this element of the curriculum can serve as the beginning for a response to students’ questions and statements like “Why do we need to learn to write like White people do?” or “Yeah, but these rules were just made up by White people.” Not all middle school classrooms would be ready or able to have such a discussion, but should it come up, I do think it is important to acknowledge that we currently live in a world in which White people made the rules-- be those societal rules or grammatical ones-- and as unfair as that might be, society will expect that we follow them until they change. Now, while I definitely would not want to communicate a message of mere submission and obedience to an unfair system, what I *would* want to communicate is that **sometimes playing by rules you don’t like can help you win the game.** And what’s more, sometimes temporarily playing by rules you don’t like is what’s necessary *in order* to change the rules to something more fair. Part of fighting for change is having the tools with which to do it, which more often than not means knowing how to communicate your needs in a way that your opponent will hear it.

This is true and relevant for all of our neighbors, friends, and students of color, whether it’s about learning how to write and speak in Standard Academic English so as to be able to succeed in collegiate and corporate environments, or whether it is something tragically more

pressing than that, such as knowing one's rights and how to communicate with a police officer if confronted. Our fictional character and our history's heroes alike found ways to succeed and survive, but they did so under dire circumstances and by being willing to play by the Whites' rules in hopes of one day winning the game.

ment. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you

try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meetinghouse every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

Timeline

The biggest takeaway I would like for my students to visualize through a timeline is the fact that neither the abolishment of slavery, nor the growing political rights of African American men (as signified by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments) ended discrimination of blacks in America. The timeline would consist of some events described in *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly*, such as the Emancipation Proclamation and Lincoln's assassination. But other facts and events would need to be added to the students' radar more directly.

This timeline should portray the fact that progress Reconstruction happened concurrently with responses from the South to try to counteract it. In order to do this, perhaps events we would categorize as "progress" would be displayed on the top of the timeline while violence and signs of discrimination like the Black Codes would go on the bottom, but on the same year. Because the theme of the curriculum is largely centered around education, the latter end of the timeline would focus on how education was changing for blacks in this era. The timeline will be used mostly to center and focus discussions about what the abolishment of slavery did and did not accomplish. It ends with the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896, which legalized segregation and gave way to many Southern states *requiring* segregation in schools.

Some events that might appear on the timeline are:

-1861- Start of the Civil War

-1862- Emancipation Proclamation

-1865- 13th Amendment;

-Establishment of **Freedmen's Bureau**

-Lincoln's Assassination

-Civil War ends w/ General Lee's surrender

-African Americans begin to mobilize to bring public education to South

-1866- Freedmen's Bureau Act removes deadline for assisting freed slaves, extends

help to freed slaves in all states instead of just former Confederacy

-Black Codes come on the scene to counteract Thirteenth Amendment.

-KKK is created, begins acts of violence on African Americans in South.

-1868- Fourteenth Amendment added to Constitution

-1870- Fifteenth Amendment added to Constitution

-Almost every Southern state has presence of **KKK**.

-1875- Congress passes Civil Rights Act- blacks have **equal rights in public** places,

exclusion from jury is prohibited.

-Jim Crow laws: segregation on railroads, which were private places.

-1877- Reconstruction era ends; Fed. gov. cease to enforce 14th/15th Am. in South.

-1883- Supreme Court: Civil Rights Act of '75 is unconstitutional-- gov. can protect

political rights, but not social; no protection against segregation.

-1890- Mississippi: poll taxes, literacy tests, etc, prohibit many blacks from voting.

-1896- Beginning of Jim Crow era; Plessy vs. Ferguson; **legalization of segregation.**

Art- “Negro” Spirituals

A vital part of slave and African American culture was the ability to form their own religious congregations and songs. African American spirituals are a direct line from today's African American culture all the way back to the 1800's. Some melodies and song themes even originated in their homelands of Africa, and the evolution into today's Gospel music is as powerful and beautiful as ever. Having an active religious life was one of the ways that many slaves subverted the institution of slavery, for many of the spirituals about religious and spiritual freedom also allowed for an outlet to sing out about freedom from slavery. The hope and inspiration to mobilize politically that these songs fostered played and continue to play an enormous role in African American culture.

The title of our book, *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly*, actually comes from a lyric to an African American spiritual called, “Free At Last.” Thanks to the sources in the back of the book, my class and I would learn the music and lyrics to this spiritual together as a way to connect to how it might have felt to gather with other slaves to sing a song so full of hope. Additionally, I'd like for the class to attend to Gospel or spiritual concert, which are performed often in New York City halls, and experience the beautiful and powerful soul music that developed from the Civil War era.

Trip

While most of the curriculum is focused on the goings-on of the South, a field trip is an excellent opportunity for students to see what was happening in their very own city. One noteworthy location is the former village of Weeksville in what is now Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

Founded in 1838, Weeksville was one of the first free black communities established in the U.S. It became a safe haven for African Americans all over the country. By 1850, the village housed over 500 residents, 40% of whom were born in the South. The field trip would involve a guided tour of the Weeksville Heritage Center in which the class would see artifacts from the era, such as the *Freedmen's Torchlight*, one of the very first African American newspapers. Still, New York actually had complicated positions on the matter of slavery despite its positive reputation. My hopes are that, on this trip, students would learn about this important aspect of their home state as well.

This trip would give students the opportunity to see in real life many of the elements of the era we studied. For example, the *Freedmen's Torchlight* would surely remind students of the paper mentioned in our literature, the *South Carolina Leader*, and bring the story and history to life. After the tour, students would have time at the Weeksville Heritage Center to sketch the artifact or scene that felt most compelling to them. Along with the sketch, they would record the reason they chose that subject to draw, what thoughts came up during the visit, and what questions the trip brought up for them.

Name: _____

Choose the artifact, item, or place in the Weeksville Heritage Center that stood out the most to you. Draw a sketch of it below.



Why did you choose this object?

What thought or thoughts came up for you while on the tour or looking around?

What questions did today's visit bring up for you?

Other- Cooking

One of the main character in the historical fiction book is called “Cook.” She is, as her name suggests, the main cook for the kitchen and also the slave who nurses the household back to good health whenever someone is unwell. Shortly after they are emancipated, Cook leaves the plantation, saying, “If I stay in this house where I been a slave, I’ll never know I’m free.”

(Hansen, 49) The issue for the plantation owners now is that no one knew how to make their food they way Cook had. Other “hands” try and fail, but only the protagonist, Patsy, had worked closely enough to Cook to learn a few recipes.

This is a familiar story to many slave-owning homes, and much of our American cuisine was strongly influenced by the African people we brought over to enslave. In fact, many crops that we consider staples of our diet were only introduced to the States because they were indigenous to Africa, such as rice, yams, peanuts (originally from South America) and more.

Our “alternative mode” project would be one that explored and celebrated the delicious “soul food” the slaves introduced to the American palate. I selected five dishes to represent some classic soul food for us to make as a class: cornbread, gombo (okra), rice pudding (or “sombi,” in its home country, Senegal), candied yams, and “hard gingerbread,” for which I have an original recipe that dates back to the 1800s thanks to the sources in the back of *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly*. This recipe is attached on the next page.

Hard Gingerbread

Rub half a pound of butter into a pound of flour; then rub in half a pound of sugar, two table-spoons of ginger, and a spoonful of rose water; work it well; roll out, and bake in flat pans in a moderate oven. It will take about half an hour to bake. This gingerbread will keep good some time.

This recipe comes from Early American Cookery: "The Good Housekeeper," by Sarah Josepha Hale.

Sources

Hale, Sarah Josepha Buell. *Good housekeeper: or, way to live well, and to be well while we live: containing directions for choosing and preparing food in regard to health, economy, and taste.* Place of publication not identified: Otis, Broaders, 1844. Print.

Hansen, Joyce. *I thought my soul would rise and fly: the diary of Patsy, a freed girl.* New York: Scholastic, 2011. Print.

Holloway, Joseph E., Ph.D. "AFRICAN CROPS AND SLAVE CUISINES." *The Slave Rebellion Website.* The Slave Rebellion Website, n.d. Web. 01 May 2017. <<http://slaverebellion.org/index.php?page=crops-slave-cuisines>>.

Sambira, Jocelyne. "Slave trade: How African foods influenced modern American cuisine | Africa Renewal Online." *African Renewal Online.* United Nations African Renewal, n.d. Web. 01 May 2017. <<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/slave-trade-how-african-foods-influenced-modern-american-cuisine>>.

"'Soul Food' a brief history." *African American Registry.* African American Registry , n.d. Web. 01 May 2017. <http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/soul-food-brief-history>.

Primary Resources and Other Materials

Amendments

THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT (1865)

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT (1868)

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

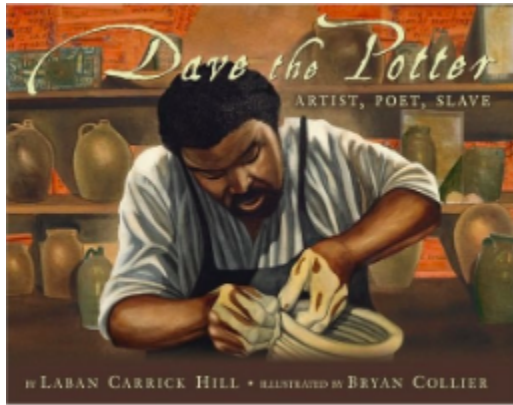
FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT (1870)

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

These three amendments represented a major and radical shift in America's legal position. Although daily life remained much the same for most people, these statements influenced American policies for years to come, especially during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

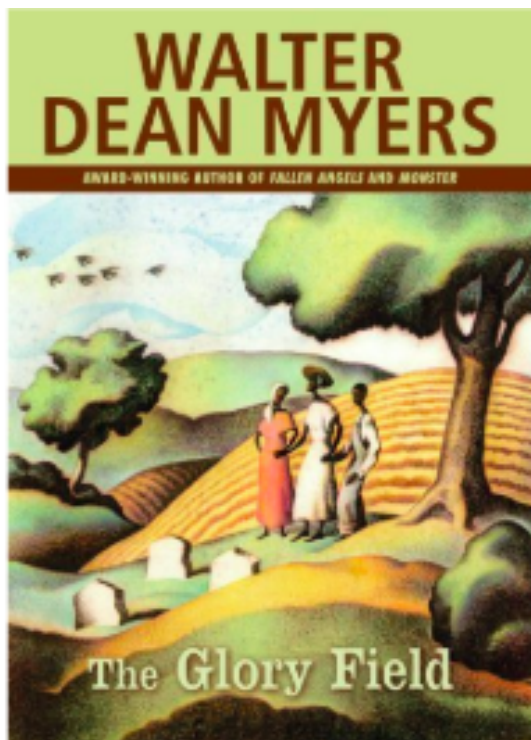
More reading for students' resource

Dave the Potter by Laban Carrick Hill



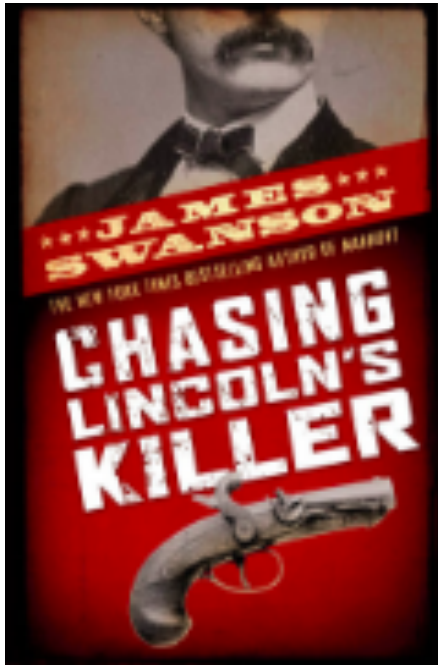
Dave Drake was an artist and slave in South Carolina. His beautiful pieces of pottery were often inscribed with original poems or couplets. He was one of the exceptions who knew how to read and write, and took the opportunity to use his clay pieces and poetry to describe his experience being enslaved. This upper elementary biography describes both his life and his powerful pieces of art, which showed that even slaves who were not working the fields desired desperately to be free.

The Glory Field by Walter Dean Myers



This non-fiction young adult book follows one family's experiences from the first member captured in Africa and brought to South Carolina in 1753 to five generations later, after emancipation.

Chasing Lincoln's Killer by James Swanson



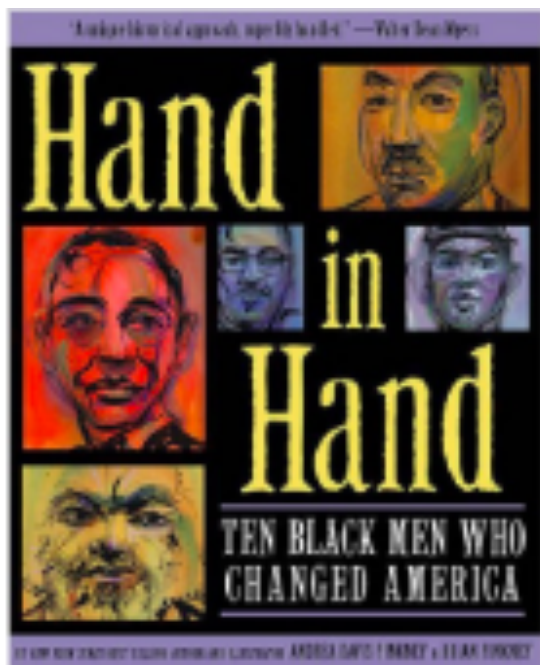
This is a young adult non-fiction book about the twelve-day pursuit and capture of John Wilkes Booth. Swanson used original trial manuscripts, interviews with relatives of the conspirators, and more to put together intricate information that is age-appropriate but doesn't whitewash the details.

The Underground Abductor by Nathan Hale



This book about the courageous life of Harriet Tubman got *incredible* reviews online. With in-depth knowledge of Tubman's life and a sense of humor, Hale makes this escaped slave's story accessible to all upper-elementary and young adult readers.

Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America by Andrea Davis Pinkey



This book is an excellent resource about influential black men in America, from slavery all the way into modern times. It profiles each one from their childhood days to their greatest accomplishments and legacies for the future. I actually picked it up as a potential resource for the research section, but found the language to be too flowery for what I was looking for.

Those featured are:

Benjamin Banneker
Booker T. Washington
A. Philip Randolph
Jackie Robinson
Martin Luther King, Jr

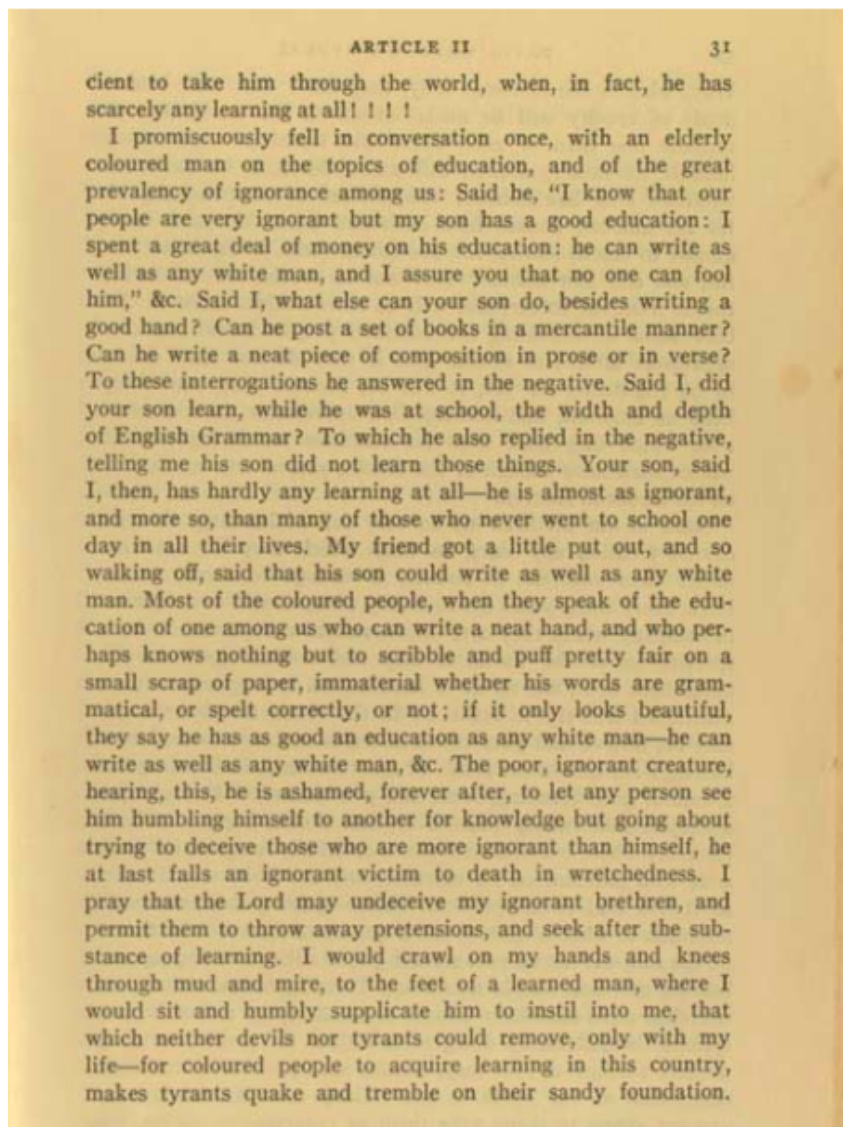
Frederick Douglass
W.E.B. DuBois
Thurgood Marshall
Malcolm X
Barack H. Obama II

Building a New Land by James Haskins and Kathleen Benson



This non-fiction book describes how America went from being a country in which slavery existed, but had legal routes through which they could be freed, to being a country that relied heavily upon cruel, enforced black labor. It describes the hardships the African slaves and slave-descendants endured while also highlighting the ways in which they strove to maintain their African heritage through music and storytelling.

An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, David Walker 1829
 Courtesy of Library of Congress,
 General Collections Division



<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/education/docs3.html>

In this document, David Walker describes a conversation he has with an older black man who is proud that his son has gotten what he feels to be a great education. Walker, however, points out that it isn't enough to be satisfied with just knowing how to read and write if the black community wasn't being educated in all of the other things the white population learned. He feels that being satisfied with just learning to be literate will only continue to hinder the progress of the newly freed African-American community. While I appreciate the sentiment, I find his tone and tactic to be pretentious and unkind, which makes his message ineffective as the community will not want to hear its value or content.

Classified submitted by Samuel Dove from THE COLORED TENNESSEAN
 August 12, 1865
 Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

aug5 Secretary.

SAML. DOVE wishes to know of the whereabouts of his mother, Areno, his sisters Maria, Neziah, and Peggy, and his brother Edmond, who were owned by Geo. Dove, of Rockingham county, Shenandoah Valley, Va. Sold in Richmond, after which Saml. and Edmond were taken to Nashville, Tenn., by Joe Mick; Areno was left at the Eagle Tavern, Richmond

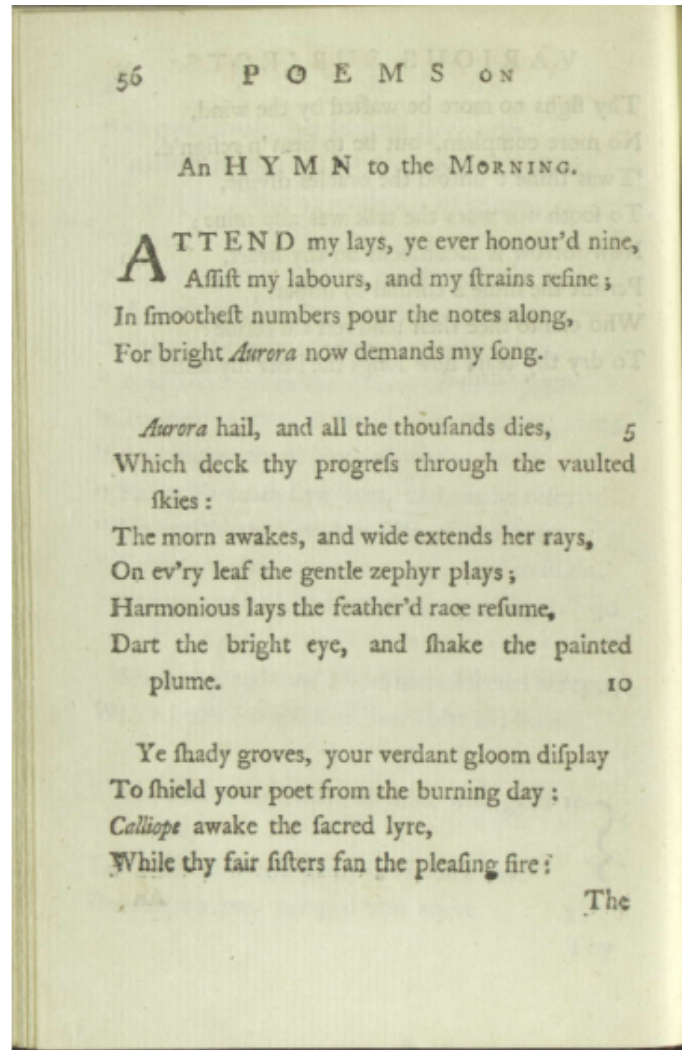
Respectfully yours,
 SAML. DOVE.

Utica, New York, Aug. 5, 1865-3m

U. S. CHRISTIAN COMMISSION,
 NASHVILLE, TENN., July 19, 1865. }

Just as described in *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly*, many African-Americans sought out the family members from which they were separated during the slave trade. In this case, a former slave named Samuel Dove is looking for his mother and siblings through an ad in *The Colored Tennessean*.

"A Hymn to the Morning" from Poems on Various Topics, Religious and Moral
 By Phillis Wheatley, 1773
 Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division



Phillis Wheatley was born in Africa and brought to Boston, MA as a very young child. Phillis' owners realized quickly that she was an exceptionally intelligent child, and consequently taught her to speak, read, and write English alongside their own children. It was not illegal to teach a slave to read and write in Massachusetts the way it was in many Southern states, but it was still an incredibly uncommon (and certainly unspoken about) thing to do. Thanks to her owners' willingness to nurture her intellect, Phillis Wheatley eventually became the first African-American poet to be published.

Learning to Read

By Frances Ellen Watkins
Harper

Very soon the
Yankee teacher
Came down and
set up school;

But, oh! how the
Rebs did hate it,—
It was agin' their
rule.

Our masters always
tried to hide
Book learning from
our eyes;

Knowledge did'nt
agree with
slavery—
'Twould make us
all too wise.

But some of us
would try to steal

For precious words it said;

A little from the
book.

And put the words
together,
And learn by hook
or crook.

I remember Uncle
Caldwell,
Who took pot liquor
fat

And greased the
pages of his book,
And hid it in his
hat.

And had his master
ever seen
The leaves upon his
head,

He'd have thought
them greasy
papers, But nothing
to be read.

And there was Mr.
Turner's Ben, Who
heard the children
spell,

And picked the
words right up by
heart, And learned
to read 'em well.

Well, the Northern
folks kept sending
The Yankee
teachers down;

And they stood
right up and helped
us, Though Rebs
did sneer and
frown.

And I longed to
read my Bible,

But when I begun to learn it,
Folks just shook their heads,

And said there is no use trying, Oh!
Chloe, you're too late;

But as I was rising sixty,
I had no time to wait.

So I got a pair of glasses,
And straight to work I went,

And never stopped till I could read
The hymns and Testament.

Then I got a little cabin
A place to call my own—

And I felt independent
As the queen upon her throne.

From:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52448>

Source: *African-American Poetry of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology* (University of Illinois Press, 1992)