Teacher’s Guide

Slavery: No Freedom, No Rights

Objectives: Students will be able to:
• Explain the impact of slavery on African Americans.
• Identify modes of resisting slavery through the actions of Nat Turner and Dred Scott.
• Explain the ‘necessary evil’ defense of slavery.
• Describe the methods of the abolitionist movement.
• Identify inconsistencies in the founding documents regarding the legal existence of slavery.

Time Needed: 1-2 class periods

Materials:
• Student Handouts
• Informal Assessment

Handouts:
• Reading (2 pages; class set)
• What They Believed Activity (half sheet; class set; double-sided)
• Activities (class set; 2 pages)

Step by Step

☐ ANTICIPATE by asking students to think of one thing they think they already know about slavery in America. Have them tell that one thing to a partner. Alternatively or in addition, call on random students to share their thoughts.

☐ DISTRIBUTEDistribute the reading pages to the class.

☐ READread the first page with the class.

☐ PAUSEpause at the top of the second page after you have read “Freedom and Equality.” Discuss the Constitutional Compromises with the class and have students underline the phrases in the quote from the Declaration of Independence that don’t make sense for a country that has slavery.

☐ FINISHfinish the reading with the class.

☐ CHECKcheck for understanding using the true/false Informal Assessment activity.

☐ DISTRIBUTEDistribute Activity – Side A to students. We recommend completing this activity as a class.

☐ READread each quote from the activity They Really Believed That! with the class. Together, check the “Examples of Pro-Slavery Thinking” chart from Reading – Side A. Have students decide which kind of thinking each quote illustrates and write the type on the line. Then have students complete Worst of the Worst! by composing a text message opposing their most hated example of pro-slavery thinking on the other side of the page.

☐ DISTRIBUTEDistribute the review worksheets to the class. Have students complete the activities. Note: Some activities review the reading material and others introduce new concepts to students.

☐ CLOSEclose by asking students to remember the one thing about slavery they thought of at the beginning of class. Then, ask them to think of one new thing they learned about slavery and tell both things to a partner, like this: “I already knew _____, and today I learned ______.”
For Sale: Human Beings!

It’s too awful to seem real, but it was. From the earliest days of the American colonies through the mid-1860’s—nearly 250 years—many American families owned slaves. A slave, or enslaved person, is a person who is held as the property of another person. Slaves in America were human beings taken from Africa. They were bought and sold the same way horses and wagons were bought and sold. Enslaved people were given no legal rights. They had to do whatever their owners told them to do, and many suffered at the hands of brutal owners. All slaves, no matter how they were treated, suffered because they had no freedom. States could choose to outlaw slavery if they wanted to, but it wasn’t until 1808 that Congress made it illegal to bring more people from Africa to be slaves. However, that didn’t mean that slavery ended. For those already here and their children, slavery continued in many states, especially in the South.

Why Would Anyone Own Slaves?

That’s easy—there was hard work to be done, and lots of it. Enslaved people received no pay for their work, so they were a form of cheap labor. A slave owner only had to invest whatever money it took to keep the people he enslaved alive. Slavery was the practice of owning human beings. Slavery existed in all of the American colonies, but it developed even more in the South, where huge plantations of tobacco, cotton, and rice required lots of workers. Plantation owners used enslaved people for farm labor and household help. In Southern cities, enslaved Africans did all kinds of jobs that involved physical labor. In the northern colonies, slavery did not become as widespread because people made a living on smaller farms or by trading or manufacturing goods. Even so, plenty of smaller households in both the north and south had one or two enslaved people that they used as servants.

How Was Slavery Defended?

People defended slavery in one of two ways. Some people thought slavery was a necessary evil—something we needed even though we didn’t like it. Others thought slavery was actually a good thing that helped everyone involved. Here are four ways people justified slavery:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Pro-Slavery Thinking</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Make Me Do That We have to have slavery so there’s someone to do the yucky work nobody else wants to do.</td>
<td>No Pain, No Gain We believe slavery in America is teaching Africans to be better people, which will be good for them in the long run.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tiger By the Tail We want to let the enslaved people go but we’re afraid of what will happen if we do, so we won’t.</td>
<td>For Their Own Good We think black people are so inferior that keeping them enslaved actually helps them.</td>
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Freedom and Equality (But Not for All)

The United States was founded on liberty and equality. But to early Americans, these principles had to do with establishing a government ruled by citizens instead of a king. The first Americans didn't even believe all citizens should have a say in government—just those who were white, male, and owned land. The U.S. Constitution was written to ensure liberty and equality, yet it also allowed slavery. Even though many early Americans thought slavery was wrong, the South relied on the labor of enslaved people for a very long time. Those states would never have voted to approve the Constitution if slavery was outlawed.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” — U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776)

Friends of Freedom

Many people in the United States opposed slavery. Abolitionists were people who wanted slavery ended permanently, or abolished. Most abolitionists lived in the northern states, where slavery wasn’t as popular, but some Southerners were abolitionists too. These people put pressure on politicians to end slavery, and they worked to convince society that slavery was morally wrong. They did this by forming groups, holding conventions, giving speeches and sermons, handing out pamphlets, and even publishing newspapers and songs.

A Deadly Revolt

One Virginia night in 1831, Nat Turner and several others who were enslaved crept into the house where their owners slept and murdered the entire family. Then they went to other houses and killed even more white people. More enslaved people joined Turner, and they killed at least 55 people before they were stopped. Turner and many others were executed for these murders, and angry white mobs murdered nearly 200 black people afterward. People blamed Turner’s rebellion partly on his education. Virginia responded by passing a law making it illegal to teach black people to read and write.

Don’t Like it? Sue Me!

Another enslaved man, Dred Scott, took a different approach. Scott’s owner moved often and took Scott with him to each new residence. Because of that, Scott had lived in both free and slave states. In 1846, he sued for his freedom. He argued that because his owner had taken him to live where slavery was illegal, he should be free. Scott’s case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court—but he didn’t win. In the Dred Scott decision, the Supreme Court ruled black people were not citizens and had no right to sue in the first place.
Informal Assessment: True or False?

**Directions:** After working through the reading pages with the class, read each true/false statement out loud. Have the class respond as a group by...

- Showing thumbs-up for true or thumbs-down for false.
- Saying “true” or “false” as a chorus.

Watch or listen for wrong or mixed answers. Use each statement as a springboard for quick review/discussion before moving on.

1. Because they were human beings, people who were enslaved had rights. (**F; Enslaved people had no legal rights, and many people did not view them as human beings.**)
2. Enslaved people were considered citizens of the United States. (**F; Enslaved people were considered property not citizens.**)
3. Slaves were always paid a small wage for their work. (**F; Slaveholders were not required to pay any enslaved person working for them.**)
4. Some enslaved people risked their lives trying to gain freedom. (**T**)
5. Many people thought slavery was something we had to have even though we didn’t like it. (**T**)
6. There were abolitionists in both the North and the South. (**T**)
7. The Constitution allowed slavery because all early Americans approved of slavery. (**F; Many called for the abolition of slavery, but in order to get delegates and states to agree to the Constitution, the Framers allowed it.**)
8. Slavery developed mainly in the North, where enslaved people worked large plantations. (**F; Most plantations were in the South, which is where slavery continued to spread and grow.**)
9. Thanks to Dred Scott, The Supreme Court said all African Americans were citizens. (**F; The Supreme Court ruled against Dred Scott and decided that African Americans were NOT citizens.**)
10. Slave rebellions caused even harsher restrictions against black people. (**T**)
11. To early Americans, liberty and equality meant that everyone should be free and equal regardless of their race. (**F; Liberty and equality were not equally applied in early America.**)
12. Enslaved people who escaped to the northern states automatically became free. (**F; If an enslaved person escaped to the North and a slaveholder claimed him or her, the enslaved person had to be returned.**)
13. Slaveholders thought enslaved people would work better if they could read and write. (**F; Most slaveholders harshly prohibited enslaved people from learning to read and write, and some states made it illegal for all black people to learn.**)
14. Some people believed keeping African Americans enslaved actually helped them. (**T**)
15. When counting the population of a state, an enslaved person counted as 3/5 of a person. (**T**).
Slavery: No Freedom, No Rights

Name:

A. They Really Believed That! Read each statement and identify the type of pro-slavery thinking from the reading.

Black people are “altogether unfit to associate with the white race” and they “might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for [their] benefit.”

— Roger B. Taney, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1857)

“We have the world by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.”

— Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President of the United States (1820)

“In all societies there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life.”

— James Henry Hammond, South Carolina Politician (1858)

“The blacks are... better off here than in Africa, morally, physically, and socially. The painful discipline they are undergoing is necessary for their further instruction as a race, and will prepare them, I hope, for better things.”

— Robert E. Lee, General of the Confederate Army (1856)

Which type of pro-slavery thinking is this?

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B. Worst of the worst! Which defense of slavery do you dislike the most?

- Don’t Make Me Do That
- No Pain, No Gain
- Tiger By the Tail
- For Their Own Good

If you could send a text message to one of the four men on the other side of the page telling him why he’s wrong, what would it say?

You can only have 160 characters, so use the space below to brainstorm.
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C. Choose the Right Word. Check the words that correctly complete each sentence.

1. An (enslaved person  abolitionist) is a person who is held as the property of another person.
2. A slave owner had to invest enough money to keep enslaved people (healthy  alive).
3. Slavery was not as widespread in the (northern  southern) colonies.
4. The Constitution required 20 years before a law could make it illegal to (import  own) slaves.
5. Early Americans gave (white male landowners  everyone but enslaved people) a say in government.
6. An enslaved person who escaped to a free state (became free forever  did not become free).
7. A “necessary evil” is something people (like  don’t like) but they think they (need  want)
8. In 1946, the Supreme Court said black people were not (slaves  citizens).
9. Abolitionists tried to keep slavery from (spreading  ending).
10. Under the Constitution, an enslaved person was counted as (a whole person  three-fifths of a person).

D. Compare. What did Nat Turner and Dred Scott have in common? Decide whether each statement describes Turner, Scott, or both. Write the letter of each description in the correct part of the diagram.

E. Identify Him!
Who do you think is most likely shown in this drawing?
- Dred Scott
- Nat Turner

F. The Way It Really Was. In the Bill of Rights, the 5th Amendment says this:

“No person shall...be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

How would this amendment sound if it described the way things really were? Re-write it here:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

H. His challenge to slavery resulted in less freedom for slaves.
G. Trading Places. If Lincoln could have made slaves and owners trade places for one day, would the owners really learn what it was like to be an enslaved person? Look at the checklist. Mark everything that could NOT be traded for just one day:

- Inability to read or write
- Dirty living conditions
- Trauma from past experiences
- Skin color
- Slavery in the Constitution
- Clothes that don’t fit right
- Hard labor in the fields
- Bad health or physical conditions
- Cheap food
- Hopelessness for the future
- Bare feet, no shoes
- Fear of being sold away from family

H. What Did It Mean to Have No Rights? Match each cause with an effect to learn about a few tragic consequences of slavery:

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I. Mark It Up. Look at this timeline of anti-slavery laws.

Circle actions that happened at the state level to end slavery.
Box actions that the federal government took to end slavery.

1619 Enslaved Africans arrive in the 13 colonies
1777 Vermont is the first to abolish slavery
1783 Massachusetts Supreme Court declares slavery unconstitutional
1787 Congress passes the Northwest Ordinance, banning slavery north and west of the Ohio River
1799 New York passes a bill that will end slavery gradually
1808 Congress makes it illegal to import enslaved Africans into the United States
1863 President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation frees enslaved people in the southern states
1865 The 13th Amendment abolishes slavery in the United States

“Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.”

Library of Congress
** Slavery: No Freedom, No Rights **

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** Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable answers. **
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Students answers should indicate that it was okay to deprive slaves of life, liberty, and property without due process of law.
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