



Teachers Guide

4-8 Teaching Unit

My Right to Freedom

Credit Statement:

Shawna Reilly researched and created this teaching unit, with interpretive and editorial support from Kori Graves, PhD, Frederick Schrock, and classroom teacher Bryony Spaziani. LaReina Torain and Lindsay Kesten assisted with the digitization and metadata creation of the primary sources. Grant funding for the project was awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy Demands Wisdom.



How to Use This Lesson:

As a **comprehensive lesson**, in successive order **OR**

As **mini-lessons**, selecting activities based on one or several primary source materials to supplement other curriculum.

This lesson has 3 Parts, with about a dozen short to medium length activities:

Part A is a teacher facilitated whole class activity, introducing the institution of slavery in Albany;

Part B activities examine the roles and experiences of people who were enslaved. Facilitated by worksheets, the activities can be completed as a whole class assignment, divided amongst small groups, or for individual work;

Part C explores the spaces where enslaved people lived and worked, including a 3D tour of Cherry Hill.

The lesson concludes with an *Essential Question: What do you think life might have been like for people- including children- who were enslaved at Cherry Hill?*

Grades 4-5 Common Core ELA Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4&5.1-4,7,9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4&5.3,4B

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4&5.3,4,8,9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4&5.1,2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4&5.3,4

Grades 6-8 Common Core Social Studies ELA Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7



Lesson 1 Content Objectives:

Students will...

...Learn how primary sources help us to understand the human experience in the Albany, N.Y. area, from the late 1700s to the turn of the 20th century.

...Understand that the institution of Slavery existed for 200 years in Albany, N.Y. and was a major part of its economic institutions, wealth building and inequality.

...Realize that enslaved people- including children- had few rights because they were not citizens under the law.

**Teacher's Background on
Enslavement at Cherry Hill**

Primary and secondary sources from Historic Cherry Hill show how enslavement was a part of the agricultural and mercantile economy of Albany and other areas of New York State's Hudson River Valley.

Activities encourage students to think about what they may know about the institution of slavery, and challenge them to recognize that slavery in Albany, New York may be both different and similar to slavery that existed elsewhere.

People who were enslaved in Albany *were* dehumanized by the institution of slavery and their enslavers; Bills of sale and other documents reveal that they were treated like property under the law, by enslavers and their descendents.

However, many people who were enslaved in Albany were also skilled, often craftspeople. They worked and lived alongside free and indentured workers.



This activity supports the following NYS Social Studies Framework:

4.3b Colonial New York became home to many different peoples, including European immigrants, and free and enslaved Africans. Colonists developed different lifestyles.

4.5a Different groups of people did not have equal rights and freedoms. There were slaves in New York State.

7.2d In New York, the Dutch established settlements along the Hudson River. Dutch contributions to American society were long-lasting.

Part A: An Introduction to the Institution of Slavery

Materials: “*Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family*” painting, Worksheets A & B.

Overview: Students look at an 18th century painting to think about what they do and do not know about enslavement in New York State.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Read from informational text for understanding.
- Record facts from informational to share.
- Share findings with the group.
- Listen to and integrate the ideas of others into their own understanding.



Procedure:

- 1) The class looks at the painting, “*Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family.*”
- 2) Each student writes down observations and 1 question on *Worksheet A*.
- 3) The teacher solicits student questions and observations from the class, making a large list (use *Worksheet B*). Teacher asks *leading questions*, optional (see right).
- 4) As a class:
 - a) Answer questions students still have about the painting.
 - b) Discuss the *Brainstorm Question: What do you know about slavery?*

The purpose of this discussion is for students to use the painting and prior knowledge to realize that the institution of slavery was brought to New York State by colonists like the Van Rensselaers, and to think about what that meant: People worked without pay, and did not have the rights of Americans.

Optional follow up questions:

What was slavery? Who was enslaved? Were children enslaved?

3) Examples of Leading Questions & Answers:

Q: What is the name of the painting?

A: *Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family.*

Q: Who is in the painting?

A: *Two children: a Van Rensselaer, (descendant of Dutch colonists) and a boy who might have been enslaved.*

Q: Who/what else is in the painting?

A: *A bird, dog, mountain, nature, a pillow.*

Q: Who is in front? Who is in back?

A: *The Van Rensselaer child is in front. The child of African descent is in back.*

Q: What do you think their relationship is?

A: *The older child was a personal servant to the younger child.*



Other Resources:

[We are using the word "enslaved" as a verb instead of "slave" as an adjective.](#)

[Writing about "slavery"? This Might Help – NAACP Culpeper](#)

[Art of Enslavement – New York Slavery Records Index](#)

[Slavery | New York State Archives](#)

Citations:

[History of slavery in New York \(state\)](#)

[Slavery in Old Albany – Friends of Albany History](#)

[Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family on NYSM page](#)

"copied from a plate reproduced in [Patria](#)..."

Procedure (continued):

5) The teacher introduces the topic of *Lesson 1: My Right to Freedom*

a) Did you know?: People were enslaved in Albany, N.Y. from 1626 to 1827.

Q: How long is that? A: 201 years

b) Background: The painting "*Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family*" is the only known picture of a Black person in Albany, New York from the 1700s.

Q: Why do you think there were so few pictures?

A: *People who were enslaved were not painted as often as people who were wealthy and in power.*

Q: Why might it be hard to learn about what life was like for Black people who were enslaved?

A: *Because most of the artifacts were saved by the enslavers.*

c) We will look at primary sources from Historic Cherry Hill to learn about slavery in Albany, New York to answer an **Essential Question**: *What do you think life might have been like for people who were enslaved at places like Cherry Hill in Albany, New York?*



Class Worksheet: Observations about the painting “Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family”

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write their observations about the painting.



Name: _____

agricultural-	H. Related to farming
bill of sale-	B. A legal document that transferred ownership of an enslaved person from one enslaver to another
citizen-	E. A person who is guaranteed certain legal rights and privileges in a nation
colonists-	A. A settler or inhabitant of a colony
enslaved-	C. To be owned by someone else; forced to work without being paid
enslaver-	J. A person who makes another person their property
laborer-	D. A person who does physical work for pay
merchant-	F. A person who buys, sells, and trades goods
primary source-	G. Original materials; a first hand account of a moment in history
trade-	I. The business of buying and selling or bartering goods

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4-8 Teaching Unit Parts B & C: Activities 1a-7b



These activities support the following NYS Social Studies Framework:

4.3b Colonial New York became home to many different peoples, including European immigrants, and free and enslaved Africans. Colonists developed different lifestyles.

4.5a Different groups of people did not have equal rights and freedoms. There were slaves in New York State.

7.2d In New York, the Dutch established settlements along the Hudson River...Dutch contributions to American society were long-lasting.

Materials: Worksheets 1a-7b, primary and secondary artifacts embedded in the Google slides.

Overview: Students look at primary source artwork and read informational text to learn about the institution of slavery in the Albany area of New York State.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Make comparisons between 3 primary sources to learn about enslavement in urban and rural settings.
- Read and compare facts from 3 informational texts for understanding.
- Write answers to questions and record information, individually or in small or large groups.

Procedure:

1. Students work as a class, in groups or independently to complete worksheets with guided questions about primary source images.
2. Teacher facilitates sharing of student findings as a whole class or in smaller groups.

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Part C: Activity 8 & Conclusion



Materials: Worksheet 8 & *Essential Question* worksheet, primary and secondary artifacts embedded in the Google slides.

Overview: Students look explore the historic house to envision the experiences of enslaved people; Teachers guide the entire class as they answer the essential question.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Reflect on what they have learned about the institution of slavery.
- Express their findings in writing.
- Express their findings verbally and listen to those of others as part of a whole class discussion.

Procedure:

1. Students work as a class, in groups or independently to explore the 3D tour of HCH and answer the questions on Worksheet 8.
2. Teacher facilitates answering of the *essential question* and discussion about group findings.

Worksheet Questions:

Write the most interesting thing you saw during the virtual tour of Cherry Hill, and why it was interesting.

OR

Draw a scene from Cherry Hill.

Brainstorm: What do you want to know more about?

Virtual walk through HCH, Dinah Jackson's room on Floor 1:

www.tours.vividmediany.com/3d-model/historic-cherry-hill/fullscreen/



Essential Question:

- *What do you think life was like for people- including children- who were enslaved at Cherry Hill?*

Essential Question Worksheet :

Think about what you've learned about in this lesson...

Think about the experiences of **Andrew,**

Molly, Elsie, Cornell, Brit, Tom, Dine,

Cato, Martineek,

Dinah Jackson, and others who were enslaved at Cherry Hill.