

## New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Curriculum Guide

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Note: The Curriculum Guide, unedited documents, and additional curriculum material and are available on-line at [http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/alan\\_j\\_singer](http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/alan_j_singer)

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# New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance

by Alan Singer, Hofstra University

In opinion essays in *The New York Times*, Brent Staples (Staples, 2000: IV, 18:1) and Eric Foner (Foner, 2000) challenged historians and teachers to rethink the way we think about and teach about slavery in the United States, especially slavery and the Northern states. According to Foner, “(o)n the eve of the Civil War, the economic value of slaves in the United States was \$3 billion in 1860 currency [approximately \$60 billion today], more than the combined value of all the factories, railroads and banks in the country. Much of the North’s economic prosperity derived from what Abraham Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, called ‘the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil.’”

Staples, a *Times* editor, described how New York City’s ties with slavery go back deep into its colonial past. The Dutch, who built New Amsterdam, “recruited settlers with an advertisement that promised to provide them with slaves who ‘would accomplish more work for their masters, at less expense than [white] farm servants, who must be bribed to go thither by a great deal of money and promises.’” Enslaved Africans helped build Trinity Church, the streets of the early city and a wooden fortification located where Wall Street is today.

The “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide opens with an examination of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and then follows the history of New York State from the original Dutch settlement at the beginning of the seventeenth century through the end of the American Civil War. It focuses on the position and contributions of people of African ancestry in New York during this period and on the roles played by the citizens of New York in both maintaining and challenging the slave system. The curriculum guide is designed to be part of the New York State human rights curriculum, to help students achieve New York State social studies standards, and to facilitate document-based instruction that prepares students to be historians, social scientists and critical thinkers. Major document collections consulted include Aptheker, 1973; Donnan, 1969; Katz, 1995; and O’Callaghan, 1856. It is organized chronologically and modeled on the state’s Great Irish Famine curriculum guide (New York State Education Department, 2001). While the opening sections focus on the downstate area, other regions of the state are included as European settlers spread north and west.

## 1. Historical Background for the “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” Curriculum Guide

The voyage of Christopher Columbus from Spain to the Caribbean in 1492 set in motion forces that transformed the world. As the nations of Western Europe competed for trade and colonies, they used the labor of enslaved Africans, the indigenous population of the Western Hemisphere and indentured Europeans, the resources and land of the Americas, and trade with East Asia, to amass a level and concentration of wealth previously unknown in the world. The investment of this wealth in building the physical infrastructure of European nations, in military might, in new world plantations, in creating commercial and banking networks, and later in new technologies and industries, was an essential element in the nascent industrial revolution in Great Britain and eventually led to European global domination (Williams, 1944; Blackburn, 1997: 572-573).

A major factor in the global transformation was the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which was dominated in

different periods by Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, England and North Americans from the United States. Between 1600 and the 1860s, the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade provided between nine and eleven million (records are incomplete and estimates vary) enslaved African workers who produced valuable cash crops, principally sugar, but also tobacco, indigo, rice and later cotton, on new world plantations. This vast forced migration changed the demographic and cultural patterns of the world and provided the profits that financed industrial capitalism. For background on the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade see Blackburn, 1997; Braudel, 1982; Klein, 1999; Thomas, 1997; Walvin, 1999; and Williams, 1944.

For most of their first 200 years of history (1624-1824), the territories that would become New York City and New York State were lightly populated and on the margins of these changes. While enslaved Africans were a major portion of the population (between one-fifth and one-third in some counties) and workforce in the “downstate” area (Long Island, New York City and the Hudson River Valley), the growth of

the slave system in New York was restricted by the failure to develop a major commercial cash crop for export. For background on Africans in New York see Gellman & Quigley, 2003; Hodges, 1999; Katz, 1997; McManus, 1966; Singer, 2003a, b, c, d.

Gradually during this era, the New York region (both city and state) grew in importance. The population of what would be New York State increased from 19,000 people in 1700, to 200,000 in 1780, and to over 1.3 million in 1820. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, New York City was a major economic, political and social leader in the new North American nation, the United States of America, and in the global system previously dominated by Western European countries. Even though a gradual emancipation act was passed in 1799 and New Yorkers celebrated the end of slavery in the state in 1827, the port of New York continued as the financial center of the illegal trans-Atlantic Slave Trade up until the 1860s. For an overview of New York history see Burrows & Wallace, 1999; Klein, 2003. For a focus on commerce see Albion, 1961; Foner, P., 1941.

### Complicity's Deep Roots

New York's complicity with slavery had deep roots and involved prominent individuals. For example, the October 2, 1738 issue of *The New York Weekly Journal* included an advertisement calling for the recapture of a runaway fleeing from his Dutchess County "master." He was described as "a copper colored Negro fellow named Jack, aged about 30 years, speaks nothing but English and reads English." A reward of "forty shillings and all reasonable charges" was to be given to whomever "takes up said run away and secures him so his master" or gives notice of him to John Peter Zenger (Hodges & Brown, 1994, 30). Zenger, whom the history text books honor as an early champion of freedom of the press, financed this commitment to "freedom" through complicity with slavery.

In 18th century colonial New York, several well-known families, including the Van Courtlandts, the Schuylers, the van Hornes, the Phillipses and the Livingstons were involved in the slave trade. It is estimated that between one-quarter and one-third of New York City's approximately four hundred merchants participated. Philip Livingston, second lord of the Livingston manor in Dutchess County, conducted extensive trade with the West Indies, including importing enslaved Africans, and was

probably the merchant most involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Besides being a landed aristocrat and a slave trader, Livingston was also a benefactor of Yale University, a New York City alderman, a representative at the 1754 Colonial Convention at Albany, a delegate to the Continental Congress, and a signer of the United States Declaration of Independence. Numerous places in the Hudson Valley still bear his family name and former family homes and estates are state and national historic sites.

Philip Livingston was one of the delegates from New York to sign the Declaration of Independence. Others, Francis Lewis, William Floyd and Lewis Morris, also enslaved Africans. Robert Livingston, one of Philip's sons and his business partner in the slave trade, served on committees drafting the Declaration of Independence and the first New York State constitution.

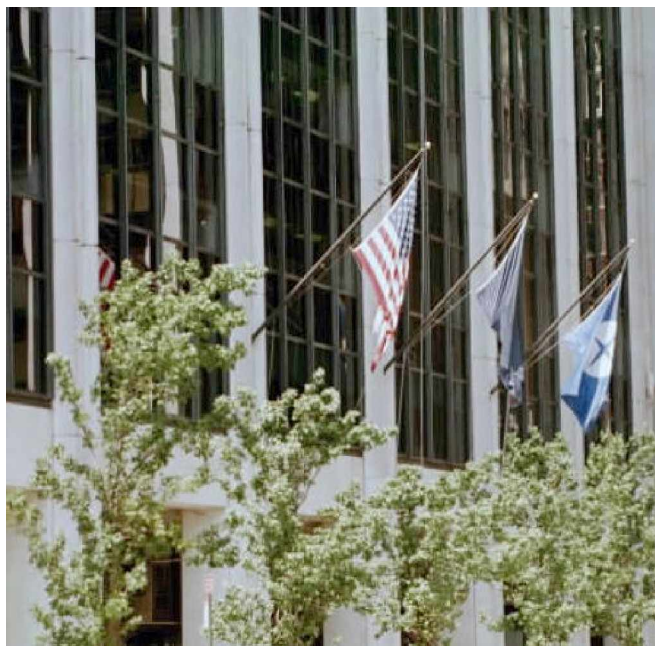
### 19th Century Sugar and Cotton Merchants

Eric Foner argues that "(a)ccounts of the city's rise to commercial prominence in the 19th century rightly point to the Erie Canal's role in opening access to produce from the West, but they don't talk about the equal importance to the city's prosperity of its control over the South's cotton trade. Because of this connection, New York merchants and bankers were consistently pro-slavery, pressing during the 1840's and 1850's for one concession to the South after another in order to maintain their lucrative access to cotton."

The city's merchant, political and religious elites were inextricably tied into the international system of exploitation of unfree labor for profit. Some indirectly profited from the agricultural commodities, especially sugar and cotton, produced by an enslaved work force. During the 1850s, *The New York Times* regularly published updates on the Cuban sugar market for New York City merchants and bankers in reports issued by a special correspondent that were delivered by steam ship. A front page article in *The New York Times* on November 15, 1852 explained the workings of the Cuban sugar industry, which paid investors two and a half times the normal interest rate on loans and which found it more profitable to smuggle in newly enslaved Africans than to allow for the internal reproduction of its work force.

William Havemeyer, elected mayor of New York City in 1845 and 1848 and again in 1872, was a

prominent business leader, director of the Merchants' Exchange Bank, president of the Bank of North America, and a major investor in the Pennsylvania Coal Company, the Long Island Railroad and numerous insurance companies. Havemeyer launched his successful political and business careers from the family's sugar refining business. First based in Manhattan and then in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (where a street still bears the Havemeyer name), it later evolved into the American Sugar Company and Domino Sugar. The raw material that provided the initial profit for all of these ventures, sugar, was imported from the deep south and the Caribbean, especially Cuba, which in 1860 produced over a quarter of the world's sugar supply. In all of these places, sugar was produced by slave labor (*New York Daily Tribune*, December 1, 1874).



**Citibank offices at 111 Wall Street in New York City occupy the same site as Moses Taylor's 19th century office at 55 South Street.**

Moses Taylor, a sugar merchant with offices on South Street at the East River seaport, a finance capitalist and an industrialist, as well as a banker, was another leading member of New York City's financial community. He was a member of the New York City Chamber of Commerce and a major stockholder, board member or officer in firms that later merged with or developed into Citibank, Con Edison, Bethlehem Steel and ATT. Taylor earned commissions for brokering the sale of Cuban sugar in the port of New York, as well as

additional fees for exchanging currency and negotiating the New York City Custom's House. He supervised the investment of profits by the sugar planters in United States banks, gas companies, railroads, and real estate, purchased and shipped supplies and machinery to Cuba, operated six of his own boats and numerous chartered vessels in the Cuban trade, repaired and equipped other boats with goods and provisions, provided sugar planters with financing to arrange for land purchases and the acquisition of a labor force, and even supervised the planters' children when they came to New York City as students or to serve as apprentices for mercantile firms.

As a result of his success in the sugar trade, Taylor became a member of the board of the City Bank in 1837, and served as its president from 1855 until his death in 1882. In the nineteenth century City Bank, a predecessor of today's Citibank, primarily issued short term credits to locally based merchants to facilitate the import-export trade. Taylor's personal resources and role as business agent for the leading exporter of Cuban sugar to the United States proved invaluable to the bank, helping it survive financial panics in 1837 and 1857 that bankrupted many of its competitors (Hodas, 1976; *The New York Times*, 1882).

The financing and operation of the Southern cotton trade and its ties with New York City merchants was detailed in an 1852 report to Congress (Albion, 1961, 97). Cotton production in the South was a major source of profit and employment for shipping, banking, insurance and textile industries that were based in New York and other Northern cities. According to first annual report of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York in 1859, even when the Europe-bound cotton trade was not shipped through the port of New York, New York City merchants and bankers often financed the exchange (Albion, 1961, 116). As a result of their financing of the cotton trade, Southern planters owed Northern merchants and bankers an estimated \$200 million dollars at the outbreak of the Civil War.

### **New York's Merchant Elite**

The attitude of New York's merchant elite towards slavery was captured in a passage from the journal of Samuel J. May that describes an incident at a meeting of the American Antislavery Society in May, 1835. According to May's account, "I was sitting upon the platform of the Houston Street Presbyterian Church in New York, when I was surprised to see a gentleman



enter and take his seat who, I knew, was a partner in one of the most prominent mercantile houses in the city. He had not been seated long before he beckoned me to meet him at the door. I did so. 'Please walk out with me, sir' said he, 'I have something of great importance to communicate.' When we had reached the sidewalk he said, with considerable emotion and emphasis, 'Mr. May, we are not such fools as not to know that slavery is a great evil, a great wrong. But it was consented to by the founders of our Republic. It was provided for in the Constitution of our Union. A great portion of the property of the Southerners is invested under its sanction; and the business of the North, as well as the South, has become adjusted to it. There are millions upon millions of dollars due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics of this city alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and the South. We cannot afford, sir, to let you and your associates succeed in your endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity. We cannot afford to let you succeed. And I have called you out to let you know, and to let your fellow-laborers know, that we do not mean to allow you to succeed. We mean, sir,' said he, with increased emphasis - 'we mean, sir, to put you Abolitionists down - by fair means if we can, by foul means if we must'" (Katz, 1995: 172).

### 19th Century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Some of New York City's merchants and bankers profited directly by financing and participating in the illegal Atlantic Slave trade. They were generally able to avoid arrest and prosecution under laws defining slave trading as piracy (punishable by death) through a legal technicality that limited the jurisdiction of American courts to United States citizens. Between 1837 and 1860, 74 cases were tried but there were few convictions and punishment tended to be minimal. In 1856, a New York City deputy Marshall declared that the business of out-fitting slavers had never been pursued "with greater energy than at the present. . . It is seldom that one or more vessels cannot be designated at the wharves, respecting which there is evidence that she is either in or has been concerned in the traffic [to Cuba]." The men who smuggled enslaved Africans referred to themselves as "blackbirders" and their illegal human cargo as "black ivory." The British counsel claimed that out of 170 known slave trading expeditions for the Cuba slave market between 1859

and 1862, 74 were believed to have sailed from New York City (Ellis, 1966: 287).

In memoirs published in 1864, Captain James Smith, a convicted slave trader, claimed that in 1859 eighty-five ships capable of carrying between thirty and sixty thousand enslaved Africans were outfitted in the port of New York to serve the slave markets of Cuba. Smith described New York as "the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade. It is the greatest place in the universe for it. Neither in Cuba nor in the Brazils is it carried on so extensively. Ships that convey Slaves to the West Indies and South America are fitted out in New York. Now and then one sails from Boston and Philadelphia; but New York is our headquarters. . . I can go down to South Street, and go into a number of houses that help fit out ships for the business." The trade was so profitable that on one voyage, a ship that "cost \$13,000 to fit her out completely," delivered a human cargo worth "\$220,000" to Cuba (Katz, 1995: 30-31).



**The restaurant on South and Fulton Streets in New York City where slave traders met .**

### Political Support for the Slave System

The leading booster of New York City's economic ties with the slave South was probably Fernando Wood. As a Congressman in the 1840s, Wood was a strong supporter of slavery and the South and he continued his support when he became Mayor of New

York City in the 1850s. On January 8, 1861, *The New York Times* published the transcript of Mayor Wood's annual report to the city's Common Council. In this message, Wood spoke about the city's options as the United States federal union appeared to be dissolving. He called on the city to declare its own independence to better facilitate continued trade with the slave South (Mushkat, 1990; *The New York Times*, 1861).

Wood's sentiments were supported by the *New York Herald* and the *Journal of Commerce*. The *Herald* published a statement by department store magnet Alexander Stewart charging that "the refusal at Washington to concede costs us millions daily." The *Journal of Commerce* warned President-elect Lincoln that "[t]here are a million and a half mouths to be fed daily in this city and its dependencies; and they will not consent to be starved by any man's policies." Towards the end of the war, Wood returned to Congress where he continued to champion the Southern cause and opposed the "anti-Slavery Amendment," the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, as a violation of private property rights (Singer, 2003a).

Other leading individuals and institutions bear responsibility for New York's complicity with slavery and the slave trade. Samuel F. B. Morse, a well-known artist and inventor, founder and the first president of the National Academy of Design, and professor at New York University, was twice a candidate for mayor of New York City as an active opponent of immigration to the United States. Morse was also a defender of slavery and wrote that it was a positive good that should be extended throughout the country. His career is commemorated by a statue in New York City's Central Park (Morse, 1863). Another Central Park statue honors Dr. J. Marion Sims, a pioneering gynecologist from South Carolina and founder of the Woman's Hospital of the State of New York, who developed a procedure to assist women injured during childbirth by experimenting, without anesthesia, on enslaved African American women (*The New York Times*, 2003: F,7).

A leading New York apologist for slavery was the city's Roman Catholic Archbishop, John Hughes. In 1853 and 1854, Hughes traveled in Cuba and the American South where he was a guest on a number of plantations and witnessed the slave system first hand. In May, 1854, Hughes delivered a sermon at old St. Patrick's Cathedral (in what is now Soho), where he discussed his experiences during this trip. In his sermon, Hughes cited passages from the Gospel

according John to justify slavery, comparing the slave master to the father of a family. Hughes claimed to recognize that "slavery is an evil," but declared it was "not an absolute and unmitigated evil" because it brought Africans to Christianity. In his column in the *Metropolitan Record*, he wrote: "We of course believe that no genuine Christian – no decent man – would be engaged in this kind of business: still, we cannot discover the crime, even of the slaver, in snatching them from the butcheries of their native land" (Singer, 2003).

### Opposition to Equal Rights

Other New Yorkers actively fought against full citizenship rights for African Americans even after they were emancipated. At an 1821 New York State Constitutional Convention, John Ross of Genesee County, Erastus Root of Delaware County, Samuel Young of Saratoga County and Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court Ambrose Spencer, representing Albany, supported a resolution that free African Americans, already barred from serving in the militia, be denied the right to vote (Gellman & Quigley, 2003: 105-110, 114-117, 125-126, 131-134). In 1834, riots broke out in New York City and pro-abolitionist churches and businesses and African American institutions, including the African school house on Orange Street, were damaged. The *Journal of Commerce*, founded by Samuel F.B. Morse, condemned the rioters, but blamed the riots on the "incendiarism" and "indiscrete zeal" of the abolitionist (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, 556-559). Even movements identified with the struggle to prevent the extension of slavery into new western territories, such as the "Barnburner" Democrats of upstate New York, often espoused racist ideas (Foner, E. : 1970: 267).

### Civil War Era Draft Riots

One of the most disturbing events in the history of the United States and New York State was the Civil War Draft Riot in New York City in 1863. The Draft Riot was the largest urban upheaval of the nineteenth century in the United States. For four days, White mobs roamed through Manhattan in defiance of the police and a small garrison of federal troops. More than one hundred people, mostly African Americans, were killed during the riot and an estimated twelve hundred people were injured (Katz, 87-96).

The Draft Riot was in response to an unpopular military conscription law passed by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln in May, 1863.

The new law allowed the affluent to avoid military service by providing substitutes or by paying \$300. Many of the first draftees in New York were slated to be Irish immigrants who were too poor to pay this tax.

New York City was ripe for an explosion when the draft lottery began on Saturday, July 11. Blacks and White immigrant workers were often pitted against each other in competition for low paying jobs. “Copperhead” newspapers and politicians, including former Mayor Fernando Wood and Governor Horatio Seymour, contributed to the tension in the city by stirring up anti-war sentiment. The last straw was the release of the casualty lists from the Battle of Gettysburg that same weekend.

On Monday, July 13, a mass protest against the draft in New York City was transformed into a riot that attacked government building and the pro-war press, and eventually turned on the city’s African American population. From newspaper accounts, it appears that the rioters, most of whom were probably Irish immigrants, turned on the City’s Black population after police had opened fire on protesters killing and wounding many people. They destroyed the city’s orphanage for Black children, attacked and lynched African Americans caught on the streets, and threatened employers who hired Black workers.

Hundreds of African American refugees from the rioting escaped to Weeksville and other largely Black settlements in Brooklyn. On the fourth day of the riot, federal troops from the Union army at Gettysburg arrived in the city and finally restored peace.

### **Campaign for Abolition and Citizenship Rights**

At the same time that some prominent New Yorkers were deeply enmeshed in the slave system, others, both Blacks and Whites, challenged and tried to overturn it. In the 1770s, Gouverneur Morris helped draft the first New York State constitution and proposed a motion, which was defeated, to abolish slavery in New York. Morris later represented Pennsylvania at the Federal Constitutional Convention, where he opposed constitutional protection for slavery, the slave trade and the three-fifths compromise (<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/morris/morris.htm>).

Soon after the Revolutionary War, the New York Manumission Society, under the leadership of John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, helped purchase freedom for enslaved Africans and in 1787 it established an African Free School to provide instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. The Society also organized boycotts of merchants and newspapers that supported slavery and

won a series of unlawful enslavement cases, defending the freedom of Black New Yorkers who were threatened with being sent to the south as slaves (New York State Freedom Trail Commission, 2001: 22).

Aaron Burr, a leading Jeffersonian Republican in New York, was a unyielding opponent of slavery who argued that Whites and Blacks were created equal and that women and men should have the same political rights. In 1785, Burr introduced an unsuccessful bill in the state legislature to immediately end slavery in New York. Despite this failure, he campaigned for the next fourteen years against New York’s slave-owning landlords and farmers, and artisans who feared job competition from freed Blacks. Ultimately, Burr was a major anti-slavery ally of Governor Jay when the New York legislature agreed to gradual emancipation in 1799 (Brady, 2001; Kennedy, R., 2000). Thomas Emmet, who arrived in the United States from Ireland in 1804, practiced law and became Attorney General of New York State. In one of his first cases, he was hired by the Society of Friends to defend several “runaway slaves” from a neighboring state who were captured in New York.

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, many New Yorkers played prominent roles in the broad alliance that coalesced into the American abolitionist movement. Lewis and Arthur Tappan, New York City merchants, were founders and officers of the American Anti-Slavery Society. At their urging, New York’s leading abolitionists formed a committee to aid in the defense of the Africans on the *Amistad*. Lewis Tappan was largely responsible for their sympathetic portrayal as dignified human beings in the press (*Social Science Docket*, 2001: 24). The first annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society was held in New York City in 1834. By 1837, there were 274 local anti-slavery societies across the state (Kraditor, 1967:6).

In the 1840s and 1850s, New Yorkers opposed slavery, especially its extension into the western territories, as members of the major political parties and of minor, specifically anti-slavery, parties. Within the New York State Democratic party, a “Barnburner” faction under the leadership of former President Martin Van Buren, attempted to challenge the hold of pro-slavery Southern Democrats on the national political party (Foner, E., 1970: 152-153). New York State Governor (1839-1843) and United States Senator (1843-1861) William H. Seward, a Whig, was one of the most outspoken anti-slavery politicians of the period. An opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act, he defended runaway slaves in court and helped the



Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman by hiding fugitive slaves in his Auburn, New York home. Chester Arthur, who later became President of the United States (1881-1885), was a leading New York opponent of slavery and racial discrimination. As a lawyer, Arthur helped secure a court decision that enslaved Africans brought into New York while in transit between slave states were free. He also successfully fought to desegregate New York City street cars. William Seward and Chester Arthur, founding members of the Republican Party, were both graduates of Union College in Schenectady, which was a hotbed for abolitionist activity.

In April, 1840, anti-slavery forces from around the country gathered in Albany where they formed the Liberty Party and nominated candidates for president and vice-president of the United States. A major force in this group was Gerrit Smith of Utica, a philanthropist, social reformer and later a Congressman. Smith used his family's fortune to establish communities for formerly enslaved Africans, including one in North Elba, New York. He was also a financial supporter of John Brown's campaign against the extension of slavery into Kansas and was implicated in Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry (<http://libwww.syr.edu>). In 1848, members of the Liberty, Democratic and Whig parties held a convention in Buffalo where they founded the Free Soil Party, a precursor of the Republican Party, that demanded that the new western territories be reserved for "free soil," "free labor" and "free men."



**Building on Main Street in downtown Rochester where Frederick Douglass printed *The North Star*.**

Segments of the New York press also played an active role in the battle to end slavery in the United States. Leading abolitionist newspapers included the *North Star*, published by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, and the *Albany Evening Journal*, edited by Thurlow Weed. William Cullen Bryant, a poet, editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and a founder of the Republican Party, was a staunch defender of the free speech rights of abolitionists and his poem, "The African Chief," attacked the inhumanity of slavery and the slave trade. Horace Greeley, the founder and an editor of the *New York Tribune*, took a strong moral position favoring the abolition of slavery. In an open letter to President Lincoln, Greeley complained about the Union army's unwillingness to free slaves in captured territory and criticized Lincoln for failing to make slavery the dominant issue of the war, compromising moral principles for political motives (*Social Science Docket*, 2001: 47, 25).

Among the state's anti-slavery religious leaders was the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, an African American who was himself a former slave. In an 1843 speech at an abolitionist conference in Buffalo, New York, Garnet called upon slaves in the South to rise up in revolt. "Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been, you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!" (Aptheker, 1973:226-233).

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of author Harriet Beecher Stowe, was a leading opponent of slavery. Beecher raised money in his Brooklyn church to purchase the freedom of slaves in symbolic protests against the institution. In a sermon delivered in January, 1861, in the midst of the nation's secession crisis, Beecher declared that "(w)e who dwell in the North are not without responsibility for this sin. . . . When our Constitution was adopted; . . . All the institutions were prepared for liberty, and all the public men were on the side of liberty." However, because of the "delinquency of the North," the nation's commitment to liberty was "sacrificed." He calls the North's failure to preserve liberty "an astounding sin! It is an unparalleled guilt!" (*The New York Times*, 2000, B11).

### The Erie Canal, the “Burned Over” District and the Underground Railroad

Because of commerce and the availability of work on the Erie Canal, Buffalo (10), Albany (13), Rochester (18), Troy (24), Syracuse (30) and Utica (35) were each counted amongst the largest urban areas in the United States at the time of the Civil War. Many of the leading opponents of slavery in New York State and the United States lived in these upstate cities and in smaller towns on the canal system, which was a major route on the Underground Railroad’s “freedom trail” to Canada. In addition, in the 1830s, the “burned-over” district, stretching between Troy and Buffalo, was the center of an evangelical religious revival that was strongly committed to social reform and opposition to slavery (Foner, E, 1970: 109; Sernett, 2002

Besides people already mentioned in this essay, anti-slavery activists from this region of New York included William W. Brown, a free African American, who organized the African American population of Buffalo to resist slave catchers; the Reverend Thomas James, an escaped slave who settled in Rochester; Jermain Loguen, station master of the local underground railroad depot in Syracuse; Sojourner Truth (Hurley and Kingston) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Johnstown and Seneca Falls), who were also leading advocates of women’s rights; and Solomon Northup, whose memoir recounted his experience as a free African American from Saratoga Springs who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South. Harriet Tubman (Auburn) and John Brown (North Elba) were also proud to call upstate New York their home.

#### Note about Sources

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the African American “slave narrative” as a unique achievement in literature. As part of the campaign to abolish slavery, hundreds of ex-slaves and runaways told their personal accounts as lectures and in autobiographical narratives. Their stories provide eloquent testimony against their captors and the inhuman institution, and bear witness to the urge of every slave to be both free and literate. Over one hundred book length narratives were written before the end of the Civil War. By the 1940s, over six thousand former slaves had told their stories of human bondage through interviews, essays and books. Many of these stories are available on the internet at [docsouth.unc.edu](http://docsouth.unc.edu) and [newdeal.feri.org/asn](http://newdeal.feri.org/asn). This curriculum guide provides material from many that touch on the history of New York State.

There are a number of issues that should be discussed with students before reading the narratives. Many of them are hundreds of pages long. To be useful in class they need to be edited by teachers and transformed into activity sheets. Students should be aware they are only examining edited fragments of much longer documents.

Before reading narratives, students should also discuss the language used in these sources. Many of the authors were highly religious and continually referred to their religious beliefs, particularly their belief that a higher power had or would intervene in their lives. Other narratives use language which was intended to be demeaning at the time and is considered offensive today.

Questions have been raised about the reliability and authenticity of some of the narratives. They were often written or dictated long after the events took place. In addition, many were transcribed and published by abolitionists who wanted to highlight the horrors of slavery as part of political campaigns to end slavery and the slave trade.

## 2. Teaching About Slavery

Historians continue to argue over the nature of chattel slavery itself (for a recent synthesis published by the American Historical Association, see Foner, E., *Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction*), the treatment of enslaved people, and the long term impact of slavery on American society. There are disputes over the reliability of sources like slave narratives, which were often ghost-written and usually published by abolitionist organizations. Secondary school teachers have to decide whether to assign literature like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or show films like *Amistad* and *Glory* to provide students with historical background. There are also disagreements about the accuracy, sensitivity, and efficacy of teaching approaches like role playing and historical reenactments, especially given continuing racial segregation and ethnic tension in classrooms, schools, and communities.

I am a white male and an ethnic Jew. For most of my career, I taught in schools where the majority or plurality of students were African American. Usually the remaining students were either of Caribbean ancestry or Latino/a. I

often found slavery was one of the most difficult topics to address as students and I were all uncomfortable. Over the years, a number of African American students raised that they resented continually learning about slavery and how their people were oppressed. These challenges forced me to reconsider how I felt as a teenager learning about the history of my own people, especially the devastation that I felt because Eastern European Jews, including my relatives, had died in the gas chambers of Nazi Germany. Knowledge of oppression did not satisfy me then. I felt humiliated and I wanted to scream out, “Why didn’t we fight back?” What finally helped me come to terms with the Holocaust was reading about Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto and the creation and defense of the State of Israel. I realize that the key for my coming to terms with the 20th century history of Jews was recognition of human resistance.

In response to my students and the connections they helped me understand about my own life, I shifted the focus on African American history in my classroom from emphasizing the burdens of oppression to exploring the history of people’s struggles for justice. Among other things, this meant that studying about the horror of slavery and the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade always had to be combined with examining the way people fought to establish their humanity.

As a teacher, I have also learned that no activity or exhibit by itself substitutes for the context created by a teacher and the relationship that exists in the classroom among students and between students and their teacher. A lesson, a museum visit or a classroom activity may seem like a good idea in the abstract, but this does not mean it will achieve its intended goals with a particular group of students. For a lesson to be meaningful it has to take into account who the students are in the class, what they already know, and how they will react. This package reproduces primary source documents from different historical era. Because of this, Africans Americans are referred to as “Negroes,” “colored” and “Black,” and by derogatory terms. Where possible, this curriculum guide refers to people as enslaved Africans rather than as slaves. We recommend that teachers discuss the use of language with their classes.

A useful teaching approach is to focus on questions asked by historians and also by students. Questions for consideration include: “How was slavery in the Americas similar to or different from slavery in other parts of the world and in other historical epochs?” “Was slavery in the Americas an unfortunate institution, even a mistake, or was it an essential feature of the economic and political development of the United States and New York?” “Why do people support institutions which they know to be unjust?” “Is it possible to identify with victims if someone has never been victimized?” “Why do people oppose injustice even if they are not directly affected?” “Can the United States ever become a more just society and finally bridge its racial divide?”

### **3. Ten Understandings about Slavery in New York and the Americas (Singer, 2003e: 166).**

Ten main ideas or understandings about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas are integrated throughout the “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide.

1. West Africans were experienced agricultural workers whose labor was used to exploit the resources of the American continents. Profits generated by African slavery and the African slave trade made possible the commercial and industrial revolutions in Europe and the United States.
2. European societies, like other societies in this era, accepted hierarchy, injustice, and exploitation as a normal condition of human life. Color and religious differences, the ease of identification and geographic isolation from their homelands made it easier to enslave Africans in the Americas rather than other groups. Europeans justified this slavery by denying the humanity of the African.
3. Although slavery existed in many times and cultures throughout human history, slavery in the British Americas, including the United States, developed into a fundamentally different institution from slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world, in Africa and even in many parts of Latin America in the same era (Smedley, 1999). There was no reciprocal obligation by the elite to the enslaved. Enslavement was a permanent hereditary status based on skin color. There was an impassable racial barrier that denied the fundamental humanity of the enslaved. In the Americas, slavery was practiced on a scale unheard of in previous human history.
4. Democracy and community among White, male, Christian property holders in the early American republic rested on the exploitation of other groups, especially the enslavement of the African. The founders of the

United States were aware of the hypocrisy of owning slaves. Slavery was intentionally not addressed in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

5. Africans in the Americas resisted slavery in many different ways. They built families, communities, and religious institutions that asserted their humanity. Many escaped to the North or West and Canada. Others joined local Native people to form independent “Maroon” communities. In the United States, enslaved Africans developed an emancipatory Christianity based on the story of Exodus and laced it with African symbols. In Haiti and Brazil, there were major successful slave rebellions. With an estimated 180,000 African Americans soldiers in the Union army, the American Civil War can be viewed, from their perspective, as an African-American liberation struggle.
6. White and African-American abolitionists struggled for decades against slavery. Most White abolitionists based their beliefs on their Protestant religion. Uncle Tom’s Cabin was the “Common Sense” of the antislavery crusade because it presented the humanity of the enslaved African.
7. While Christian religious beliefs were used to challenge slavery, they were also used to justify it. Defenders of slavery, particularly in the south, used Biblical citations to defend the “peculiar institution.”
8. Slavery in the United States was a national, rather than a southern, institution. There was limited slavery in the north until 1840. Prosperity in the North, New York State, and especially New York City, rested on the slave trade and the processing of and trade in slave produced raw materials.
9. The Civil War was not initially fought by the North to free Africans; it was fought to save the union. It ended legal bondage, but not the racist ideas that supported the system.
10. Social, political and economic inequality in the United States today and across the globe has roots in the social, political and economic inequality produced by slavery and the slave trade.

#### **4. Ten Curriculum Goals for “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” Curriculum Guide**

Among the goals of this document-based curriculum guide is to engage students as historians as they sift through primary source materials on the history of New York State’s involvement with slavery and the slave trade and struggles for their abolition. It is designed to help students begin to understand the complexity of United States and New York State history. The ten major themes from New York State history imbedded in the curriculum guide include:

1. Slavery, until its abolition in New York State in the beginning of the 19th century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade even after it was declared illegal in 1808, the financing of slave plantations in the South and the Caribbean, the shipping of slave-produced products, and the manufacture of goods using the commodities of slavery were integral to the prosperity of New Netherland, the British colony of New York and New York State.
2. Many New Yorkers implicated in the slave system were politically influential and economically powerful and shaped the policies of the state and nation. A number of prominent individuals and the founders of the state and national governments were participants in and profited from the slave system.
3. In order to preserve the union and protect their own profits from products produced by enslaved workers, many New York and national leaders who opposed the expansion of slavery into the West were willing to compromise with Southern slave owners and to support the slave system in the South even after the outbreak of the American Civil War.
4. Despite the Declaration of Independence’s promise of human equality, there were ideological inconsistencies in the early nation.. Many leading New Yorkers, including some White opponents of slavery, believed in the racial inferiority of African Americans, opposed full political rights for African Americans and endorsed their recolonization in Africa. Some of the most radical abolitionists in New York State who accepted Black equality were unwilling to support equal rights for women. Significantly, Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony were major allies in the struggles for rights for both African Americans and women.
5. The slave system and racism contributed to an endemic fear of uprisings by New York’s African population during the colonial era. Rumors of potential rebellion led to “witch hunts.” Africans who fought for their freedom in the colonial era were summarily tried and executed. Suspects were tortured until they confessed to “crimes” and implicated others. Minor infractions of the slave code were severely punished. On a number of occasions in the history of New York, violent mobs attacked African Americans and White abolitionists.

6. At the same time, New York State offered a safe haven to many Africans who escaped from slavery and a place where free African Americans could organize politically with White allies to end the slave system and achieve full citizenship. New Yorkers, both Black and White, were active participants and national leaders in political campaigns to end slavery and to resist the oppression of Black people.
7. African Americans in New York resisted slavery through active and passive means. They resisted slavery by running away to freedom, organizing their own cultural and religious institutions, building families and communities, openly or surreptitiously disobeying slaveowners, and through open revolt.
8. Resistance to slavery was often violent. Enslaved Africans in New York openly rebelled against slavery during the colonial era. Many supported the British against forces fighting for American independence in an effort to achieve their own emancipation. Leading New York State abolitionists, both Black and White, violated the law and physically prevented the recapture of runaway slaves. Some New York abolitionists were supporters of John Brown's military campaigns against the slave system and were implicated in his armed assault on a federal weapon's arsenal in 1859.
9. The histories of many parts of New York State were influenced by slavery and the slave trade and the struggles to end them. Because of the pattern of settlement in the 17th and 18th centuries, slavery in New York State was concentrated on Long Island, in New York City and its surrounds, and in the Hudson River Valley up through Albany. In the 19th century, the port of New York functioned as a major international center for financing the slave trade and the trade in goods produced by slave labor.
10. New York State was a major center for abolitionist and anti-abolitionist movements and publications. Because of their proximity to Canada, work opportunities, and religious and other social movements, regions of New York State and cities located along the route of the Erie Canal played major roles on the underground railroad and in anti-slavery agitation during the nineteenth century. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, the availability of land in the North country made it a safe haven for free Blacks and escaped slaves who sought a place where they could build families and communities.

### 5. New York State Learning Standards

The “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide supports the 1997 New York State legislative mandate to include human rights education in 4-12 social studies instruction. According to this mandate, the major topics to be explored should include the Great Irish Famine and the right to food, the European Holocaust and the right to survival and Slavery and the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the right to freedom. This curriculum guide is also designed specifically to encourage the exploration of key concepts and develop critical skills outlined in the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies.

#### History of the United States and New York:

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

The study of slavery in New York, the involvement of New Yorkers in the trans-Atlantic Slave trade, and of the role of New Yorkers in the struggle to abolish slavery a) contribute to student understanding of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context. It will examine the ways people are unified by many values, practices and traditions; b) illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time; and c) involve learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups in United States and New York State history. Studying the African American experience in New York and

comparing it to the experiences of other groups will help students to better understand the problems confronting, and the achievements of, ethnic minorities throughout United States history. For example, students can compare the experiences of African Americans with other New Yorkers in the colonial era and during the new nation and the struggle for the abolition of slavery and for full citizenship for Blacks with the difficulties faced by immigrants and women.

**World History:** Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

The study of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and New York's role and of the colonization and western expansion of settlement will a) contribute to student

understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs and traditions; b) facilitate an examination of the human condition, the connections and interactions of people across time and space, and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives; c) help students understand timeframes and periodizations, make it possible to examine themes across time and within cultures, and focus on important turning points in world history; d) involve learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups to world history and civilizations. In addition, the use of primary source historical documents, charts, graphs, literature, art and music and a focus on historical complexity and multiple perspectives will enhance skills of historical analysis including the ability to investigate differing and competing interpretations of the theories of history, hypothesize about why interpretations change over time, explain the importance of historical evidence, and understand the concepts of change and continuity over time. For example, students will examine the role played by New Netherland and New York in European imperial ventures and the contributions of enslaved Africans to their growth.

**Geography:** Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live -- local, national and global -- including the distribution of people, places and environments over the earth's surface.

The study of the global migration of people and products, especially the trans-Atlantic Slave trade and commerce in the products of the labor of enslaved Africans, and an examination of the relationship between demography, geography, resources, and historical events will a) illustrate the essential elements in geographic analysis: understanding the world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical settings (including natural resources), human systems, environment and society and the use of geography; and b) enhance the ability of students to ask and answer geographic questions; analyze theories of geography and acquire, organize and analyze geographic information. For example, students will discover how the state's location on the Erie Canal and near Canada helped New York to become an important center for abolitionist activity and a route on the Underground railroad.

**Economics:** Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and non-market mechanisms.

The study of the economic history of New York, including development during the colonial era and commerce and industry during the nineteenth century will a) contribute to student understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world; and b) enhance the ability of students to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life. For example, students will analyze the impact of its involvement in the financing of and trade in slave produced products on the economic development of New York City.

**Civics, Citizenship and Government:** Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

The study of the history of the struggle to end slavery in New York and the United States will a) contribute to student understanding of civics, citizenship and government, and basic civic values (such as justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and respect for self, others and property); b) involve learning about political systems, the purposes of government, and civic life, and the differing assumptions held by people across time and place regarding power, authority, governance, and law; and c) enhance the ability of students to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions and develop and refine participatory skills. For example, students will develop an understanding of the importance of active citizens in a democratic society as they study about the struggle by both Black and White New Yorkers to abolish slavery and achieve equal rights for African Americans.



The “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide is also designed to support student mastery of the Learning Standards for the English Language Arts and student mastery of the Learning Standards for the Arts.

### **Language for Information and Understanding:**

Students will read, write, listen and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts and ideas; discover relationships, concepts and generalizations, and use knowledge generated from oral, written and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply and transmit information.

Students’ study of “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” will involve research projects and presentations; they will work individually and collectively to gather evidence from a variety of sources, to evaluate primary source documents, to discover relationships and to develop concepts and generalizations about the materials. Students will write persuasively about topics using their research to support their arguments, developing appropriate rhetorical structures and presenting their information and interpretation clearly, concisely and comprehensibly.

**Language for Literary Response and Expression:** Students will read, write and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written and electronically produced texts and performances. They will draw on their own experiences to develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical and cultural dimensions that the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Students can respond to the literature of the “New York and Slavery” making reference to the literary elements in the text and connections with their personal knowledge and experience. Students will consider “slave narratives” literature and write about the texts in terms of the different cultural settings pointing out similarities and differences. Students will write their own responses to the “slave narratives”: Stories, poems, plays and literary essays; they will also produce books of stories and poems about “New York and Slavery” for younger children.

### **Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation:**

Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments about experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Students will develop essays, position papers, speeches and debates about “New York and Slavery” in the context of the wider challenges of struggling to expand human freedom. They will analyze issues, ideas, texts and experiences and support their positions with well developed arguments that make effective use of details and supporting evidence.

**Language for Social Interaction:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use their social communications with others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Students will use effective speech to interact with classroom community members. They can participate in electronic discussion groups and e-mail exchanges. Students can develop the *persona* of an enslaved African or a participant in the struggles over slavery and write a series of letters to

**Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts:** Students will create and compose original work in their media: dance, music, theatre and visual arts. Student musicians will compose original works and perform musical works composed by others. Student actors will create and perform theatrical pieces, as well as perform in dramatic works composed by others. Students of the visual arts will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes and metaphors.

Activities and projects in the “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Curriculum” provide opportunities for students to perform monologues which express the experiences of enslaved Africans and participants in the struggles over slavery and to develop an idea for a work of art that would be a memorial to the victims of slavery.

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*The New York Times* (1882, May 25). "An Old Merchant's Death."  
*The New York Times* (2000, January 15). "Think Tank; Sermons on the Climb to the Mountaintop."  
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 Thomas, H. (1997). *The Slave Trade, 1440-1870*. New York: Simon & Schuster.  
 Walvin, J. (1999). *The Slave Trade*. Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton.  
 Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

### Documenting African American Life

William L. Katz has published numerous books documenting African American life in the United States and New York State. Most of these books are intended for use as texts or resources in middle school and high school classrooms. The following books by William L. Katz are available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*Black Legacy: A History of New York's African Americans*, (hardcover) 1997. Examines the history of African Americans in New York City from Dutch settlement up to the present. Includes a rich collection of pictures. Intended for middle-level and high school students.

*Eyewitness: A Living Documentary of the African American Contribution to American History*, (paper) 1995. Combines a narrative of African American history with primary source documents from the era of European colonization of the Americas up to the present. Excellent for high school use.

*Flight from the Devil: Six Slave Narratives*, (paper) 1996. Narratives by five African American men and one woman who escaped from slavery. Includes Linda Brent, William Wells Brown, James Pennington, Lunsford Lane, Jacob Stroyer and Moses Grandy.

*Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, (paper) 1997. Explores the history of Black Indians, people of dual African and native ancestry. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

*Black People Who Made the Old West*, (paper) 1993. Tells the story of thirty-five African Americans who helped shape life from colonial times to the post-Civil War west.

*Black Pioneers: An Untold Story*, (hardcover) 1999. Examines the history of African American pioneers in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. Intended for middle-level and high school students.

*The Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States*, (paper) 1996. A resource guide for teacher. Traces the history of African Americans in the American west from Lewis and Clark to the dawn of the twentieth century.

*Black Women of the Old West*, (hardcover) 1995. Uncovers the hidden history of Black women in the west. Includes 100 photos and clippings. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

*Breaking the Chains: African-American Slave Resistance*, (paper) 1998. Challenges the myth that African Americans accepted slavery. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

### Designing a Monument Depicting Slavery

**How graphic a monument?** (adapted from *Newsday* 2/25/01, p 23, story by Hugo Kugiya)

Savannah, Georgia is in the process of designing its first African-American monument. Slightly more than half of its citizens are African-American, yet their history and particularly their slave history, is blatantly ignored or “rosed over” in the words of one local tour guide in so many of the city’s museums and historic sights. The planned riverfront monument of bronze and granite, depicting a Black family of four with broken shackles at their feet, will be put directly behind City Hall, where many of the city’s forbearers arrived as cargo to be sold. The City Council’s four Black and four white members cannot agree on the inscription proposed by Abigail Jordan, a retired educator. The passage, from the poet Maya Angelou, reads in part: “We were the stolen, sold and bought together from the African continent. We got on the slave ships together. We lay back to belly in the holds of the slave ships in each others’ excrement and urine together, and our lifeless bodies thrown overboard together. Maya Angelou said that, if asked, she will give her permission for use of the passage, but she would prefer the uplifting conclusion also be used: “Today we are standing up together, with faith, and even some joy....” The point of the passage, Angelou said in a phone interview, “is that we’ve come this far by faith, that it does not expunge in any way the pain and the horror, but it does speak to the human spirit, that we are still here, still rising.”

#### Discussion Questions:

1. If you were on the Savannah City Council, how would you vote on the proposed monument? Why?
2. What changes, if any, would you make to the proposed monument? Why?
3. What other monuments have you seen that depict difficult chapters in history? How would you assess those designs? What made them succeed or fail as monuments?

#### Follow-up Activity: Design a Monument Depicting Slavery in Your Community or New York State

In your design process, be sure to take into account the following: Statistics on slavery in your community or New York ; Conditions of slavery; Economic, political and social effects or costs of slavery; Quotes and other primary sources you wish to include; Setting of your monument; Materials used in the creation of your monument; Tone you wish your monument to convey.

### Using History-Mysteries with Elementary, Middle and High School Students

With the advent of high stakes exams required for graduation in New York State, standardized testing has seeped into the middle and elementary schools. The good news is that at all levels the tests require students to analyze historical documents, think critically about them, and write essays based on them; thus teachers must use more primary source documents in their classrooms. For the most part, New York State assessments require upper level thinking and, therefore, should drive upper level instruction. But that upper-level instruction need not be devoid of fun; on the contrary, doing the stuff of history ought to be exciting. What are historians, after all, but detectives who get to read other people’s diaries, letters and speeches, finding clues, putting together puzzle pieces, until a more complete picture of an event or time period emerges. A series of History-Mysteries designed for elementary, middle and high school students are included throughout the “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide. They can also be used as document-based essay assignments. An organizer to assist students and student teams as they complete their history-mystery assignments is on the next page.

#### Index of History-Mysteries in the New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Curriculum Guide

What was life like for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony?

What was slave life like on Long Island?

How did slavery develop into a formal institution in the British colony of New York?

John Brown: Martyr or Religious Fanatic? Freedom fighter or traitor and terrorist?

How did New York City merchants and bankers profit from slavery in Cuba?

How did New York City’s economic and political elite respond to the threat of Southern Secession?

### HISTORY-MYSTERY INSTRUCTION SHEET

You have all become historians. Historians are really detectives who find clues and put together puzzle pieces until a more complete picture emerges.

1. Each group should read through the documents in the packet.
2. As you read, you should record evidence you discover in the chart, indicating whether it proves or disproves the statement above.
3. If you find that you need information beyond what the documents provide to help you answer the question, make note of this in the space provided.
4. Record interesting points or have any questions that do not seem to fit into the chart.

<u>More evidence needed</u>	<u>Interesting points</u>	<u>Questions</u>

<u>Evidence which proves the statement</u>	<u>Evidence which disproves the statement</u>

Now that you've been doing the work of real historians, you should be able to answer these questions:

**How do historians know what they know? What types of sources do they use as evidence?**

## Slavery on the Internet

by Kerri Creegan, Robin Edwards, Vonda-Kay Campbell and Charles Cronin

### Black History Sites

<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html> The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Digital images of slavery, lesson plans, and useful links.

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/afroam.html> Links to popular and informative sites on the African American experience.

<http://www.blackquest.com/link.htm> Alphabetical list of links to African American History, Culture, and Black Studies resources. Includes slave narratives and the history of slavery in America.

[http://www.kidsdomain.com/kids/links/Black\\_History.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/kids/links/Black_History.html) Links to websites and activities that include topics such as the Underground Railroad, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman and Brown v. Board of Education audio links.

<http://www.ecb.org/surf/blackhis.htm> This collection of educational sites relating to African-American history covers slavery and resistance, the civil rights movement, African-American art and culture and more

<http://www.ket.org/Education/IN/blackhistory.html> A website offering lessons on African Dance and about African American experience as physicians in Lexington, Kentucky.

<http://www.ubp.com/about/mission.html> Offers a more global perspective of the African diaspora, its people and their cultures. It can be used as an educational resource by students and teachers.

<http://www.thebluehighway.com/bhistory.html> Educational activities for Black history month.

### African Experience / Slavery in Ancient World / Middle Passage

<http://www.harper.cc.il.us/mhealy/g101ilec/ssa/afh/afcol/afcoltx.htm> Early European contact with Sub-Saharan Africa.

<http://www.pbs.org/wonders/Episodes/Ep3/slave.htm> Wonders of the African world and the legacy of the African Slave Trade.

<http://africancultures.about.com/culture/africancultures/cs/slavetrade/index.htm> Links to over 700 sites including a wide variety of documents about the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

<http://www.coccedu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/timelines/htimeline3.htm> Timeline of events from before the Atlantic Slave Trade through 19th century European expansion in Africa.

[http://gloria-brame.com/mbarchive/slavery\\_in\\_the\\_ancient\\_world.htm](http://gloria-brame.com/mbarchive/slavery_in_the_ancient_world.htm) Links include history of slavery in Egypt and Rome.

<http://www.crystalinks.com/greekslavery.html> Information about slavery in Ancient Greece.

<http://people.morrisville.edu/~satterg/slave.htm> Slavery in Ancient Rome primary source documents.

### Slavery in the Americas Sites

<http://slaveryinamerica.org> The companion site to the PBS special Slavery and the Making of America.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibits/aopart1.html> African American Odyssey exhibit explores efforts to



r e s i s t e n s l a v e m e n t a n d a c h i e v e f u l l  
p a r t i c i p a t i o n i n A m e r i c a n s o c i e t y .

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/> Includes images, documents, stories, biographies, commentaries.

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk> Slavery in the United States from 1750-1870 and the American Civil War. Excerpts from narratives of Olaudah Equino, Solomon Northup, and Sojourner Truth. Accounts range from 1000 to 2000 words.

<http://web.uccs.edu/~history/index/afroam.html> Links to primary source documents on the history of slavery, slave narratives and the slave trade.

<http://www.liunet.edu/cwis/cwp/library/aaslavry.htm> Brief explanations of the African-American experience from slavery to freedom written by professors at C.W. Post.

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/slavery> Limited number of pictures from the era of slavery.

<http://www.eca.com.ve/wtutor/juli/gallery.htm> Gallery of pictures on slavery gathered from the book "A Kidnapped Prince" by Olaudah Equino. Sponsored by the Equiano Foundation.

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/arhu/depts/history/freedman/fssphome.htm> Freedman and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland. Primary sources on Emancipation and the Civil War.

<http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/slavery.html> Slavery unit, introduction and three lessons. Primary sources. Slave Code of 1833 in Alabama; accounts of former slaves; accounts of former slaveholders.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad> National Geographic site that takes you on an interactive trip on the Underground Railroad.

<http://www.gliah.org> and [www.yale.edu/glc](http://www.yale.edu/glc) Primary source material from the Gilda Lerner Institute includes documents on Amistad.

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst/are/linkfig.htm> Looks at religious influence on abolition.

<http://www.multcolib.org/homework/aframhc.html#afameg> Several links to African American history sites.

<http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/slavedata/index.html> Slave movement during the 18th and 19th centuries.

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/History/tm/black.html> African American History website.

<http://vlib.iue.it/hist-slavery/geogr-chrono/americas/Index.html> Virtual library of slavery in American History.

### Slave Narratives Sites

<http://docsouth.unc.edu> Unedited North American Slave Narratives, beginnings to 1920 at the Documenting the American South site of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html> American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology. Narratives and pictures from the Works Progress Administration, 1936 to 1938.

<http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/> Selections from the Works Progress Administration American Slave Narratives. Seventeen narratives capture the experience of former slaves.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html> Slave narratives from the Federal Writers Project.

<http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl311/slave.htm> Extensive listing of slave narratives.

[http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/unchained\\_memories/](http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/unchained_memories/) HBO series on slave narratives.

<http://www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/biohist/slavnarr/main.htm> Songs, hymns, and religious traditions.

### Local History Sites

<http://projects.ilt.columbia.edu/Seneca/start.html> Seneca Village site examines the history of African Americans in New York City. Links, background information, pictures and cartoons.

<http://www.nyhistory.com/ugrr> New York Underground Railroad sites. Map of routes in New York State. Lists people involved in the Underground Railroad in NYS.

<http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/amistad00072.html> Tells the story of the re-creation of the slave ship Amistad.

<http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/ugrr/home.html> Underground Railroad in Rochester, NY.

<http://www.state.nj.us/state/history/material.html> New Jersey Underground Railroad routes and maps

<http://www.nysed.gov/freedom.htm> Report of the New York State Freedom Trail Commission

### Underground Railroad Sites in New York

Assembled by Laura Peterson and Jennifer Pesato

Study of the Underground Railroad allows teachers to focus on moral, religious and heroic efforts to challenge slavery and provides an opportunity to include more local history in the curriculum. The following Underground Railroad sites in New York are well documented. Some are open to the public. Information on some of the sites in New York City was gathered by S. Brawarsky for *The New York Times*.

**Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, Residence, and Thompson AME Church (Cayuga County):** Harriet Tubman (1820?-1913), a renowned leader in the Underground Railroad movement, guided approximately 300 people to freedom in the north and Canada. She established the Home for the Aged in Auburn, New York in 1908. The Home for the Aged is located at 180 South Street, her home is located at 182 South Street, and the church is located at 33 Parker Street, Auburn, New York. The Home for the Aged is open to the public by appointment. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground>

**John Brown Farm and Gravesite (Essex County):** John Brown's home during the ten year period prior to the Harpers Ferry raid in 1859. After Brown was buried on the farm, it became a pilgrimage site for free African Americans and white abolitionists. It is located just south of Old Military Road in Lake Placid, New York. It is open to the public. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground>

**Wunsch Student Center (African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church, Kings County):** Originally known as the Bridge Street Church, it was the first black congregation in Brooklyn. In the basement the church housed and fed fugitive slaves who slept on the floor. When in fear of detection they descended into a subcellar. It is said that the runaways left markings on the walls. The building, at 311 Bridge Street, has no visible signs of the fugitives' hiding spots. [http://www1.poly.edu/fresh\\_orient/page4\\_3.html](http://www1.poly.edu/fresh_orient/page4_3.html)

**Plymouth Church of the Pilgrim (Kings County):** This was the church where Henry Ward Beecher preached from 1847 to 1887 and hid fugitive slaves in the basement and tunnel-like passageways that run the length of the building. The current church is considering creating a museum in the basement of the Church.

**Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (Kings County):** This building at South Oxford Street in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn was built between 1860 and 1862. It contains a basement and heating tunnels where fugitives were often hidden. Letters written by the congregation's first preacher, Dr. Theodore Cuyler confirms this occurrence. The church is open to the public. [http://www.sowingseeds.tv/ep2\\_lafayette.jsp](http://www.sowingseeds.tv/ep2_lafayette.jsp)

**Gerrit Smith Estate and Land Office (Madison County):** Gerrit Smith (1797-1874), a nationally prominent and influential abolitionist and social reformer, served as president of the New York Anti-Slavery Society between 1836 and 1839. During the 1840s and 1850s, Smith acted as a "station master" in the Underground Railroad. His Peterboro, New York estate, a widely recognized safe haven for runaway slaves enroute to Canada, was designated a National Historic Landmark. The Gerrit Smith Estate and Land Office are at the corner of Nelson and Main Streets. The Land Office is the only building open to the public. [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ny3.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ny3.htm)

**Main Maid Inn (Nassau County):** This restaurant in Jericho on Long Island was once the home of Valentine Hicks. On the second floor a cupboard door hides a set of stairs leading to an attic where there is a hidden crawl space. The cellar also had an unseen passageway behind a wall leading outdoors. The Hicks family is said to have transported fugitive slaves across the Long Island Sound. <http://westburyquakers.org>

**Bialystoker Synagogue (formerly Willett Street Methodist Episcopal Church, New York County):** This building became a synagogue in 1905. It contains a passage way through what is now the synagogue's women's gallery. A narrow shaft with a tall wooden ladder leads to an attic. In the peaked chamber there are additional ladders leading to loft spaces. According to oral tradition, fugitive slaves were hidden here. <http://library.albany.edu/speccoll/campusbuildings/willett.htm>

**Thomas Downing's Oyster House (New York County):** The Downings were a free black family who led fugitive slaves down into the basement of their restaurant where they hid from bounty hunters. The restaurant is long gone, but its operation on the Underground Railroad lasted from the 1830's to the 1860's. The building is no longer in existence. <http://www.tribecatrib.com/newsjan04/African-footsteps.htm>

**David Ruggles House (New York County):** David Ruggles was an abolitionist leader of the New York Committee of Vigilance, editor of the black magazine *Mirror of Liberty*, and a vital link on the Underground Railroad. Located at 36 Lispenard St. at the corner of Church Street, this is the location where he hid fugitives such as Frederick Washington Bailey, who later changed his name to Frederick Douglass.

**Mother A.M.E. Zion Church (New York County):** The original Mother A.M.E. Zion Church was one of the first churches in New York built and led by African-Americans. This church was known as an Underground Railroad depot. A plaque now marks its place on the sidewalk at 158 Church Street at the corner of Leonard Street. <http://www.tribecatrib.com/newsjan04/African-footsteps.htm>

**Reverend Charles B. Ray Home (New York County):** The Reverend often had fugitive guests arriving at his home. The building is now a condominium with a Chinese beauty shop and salon. 153 Baxter Street, at the corner of Grand Street.

**David Barker Home (Niagara County):** Baker was a founder of the Quaker community in Barker, New York and is believed to have been a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. The Quakers, as a group, were very active supporters of the Underground Railroad network. The Barker Home is located on Quaker Road in Barker, New York. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Murphy Orchards (Niagara County):** Charles and Libby McClew moved to the property in 1850 and built the house and barn which houses the entrance to a secret underground chamber which was used to hide people escaping slavery on their way to freedom in Canada. This room remains virtually unchanged since it was used as a "station" on the Underground Railroad. A view of the barn can be seen on the website. The farm is located about 20 miles from the Niagara River in Lewiston, and was one of the last stops before the fugitives crossed into Canada. It is open to the public. Call 716-778-7926 for information or tour schedules. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Hopkins Creek (Niagara County):** This creek served as a route used by fugitives heading from Murphy Orchards to the Thomas Root Home. It originates due north of Pekin and flows through McClew farm and empties into Lake Ontario. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Eighteen Mile Creek (Niagara County):** After leaving the McClew farm, the fugitives could follow along the banks of the Creek to reach the Erie Canal in Lockport. The McClews, when possible, may have provided transportation for hidden fugitives in farm wagons taking produce into Lockport. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Lockport Locks and Erie Canal Cruises Building (Niagara County):** This building provided secret access to the canal. Many canal boat captains helped in transporting fugitives toward Canada. Open to the public. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Lockport YWCA (Niagara County):** A tiny attic room in this building was used to hide fugitives. 32 Cottage St., Lockport, New York. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Main and Locust Streets (Niagara County):** This area was the site of Lyman A. Spalding's, a conductor on the Underground Railroad, hotel and home. Diagonally across Main Street from the hotel is the first Quaker meeting house in Lockport (built in 1833). The whole area was a cauldron of anti-slavery activity. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Thomas Root Home (Niagara County):** People escaping from slavery were hidden by the Root family and often transported to the Canadian border in farm wagons carrying produce. 3106 Upper Mountain Rd., Pekin, New York. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**First Presbyterian Church (Niagara County):** The church and burial site of Underground Railroad conductor Josiah Tryon. 505 Cayuga St., Lewiston, New York. <http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html>

**Asa Beebe and Mary Whipple Beebe House (Oswego County):** In 1840, Asa and Mary Whipple Beebe bought a house on Main Street, just west of Black Creek. In 1851, they moved to Toad Hollow, where Jerry Henry found refuge for two weeks in the Beebe barn. [http://www.oswego.edu/Acad\\_Dept/a\\_and\\_s/history/ugrr/contents.html](http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html).

**Orson Ames House (Oswego County):** In 1838, Orson Ames was part of Mexico township's first Vigilance Committee, organized to help fugitives escape to Canada. The Ames family housed the fugitive Jerry McHenry for one night in 1851 before sending him to Asa Beebe's barn north of the village. Orson Ames then wrote to a brother in Oswego who made arrangements with a boat captain to take Jerry McHenry to Canada. [http://www.oswego.edu/Acad\\_Dept/a\\_and\\_s/history/ugrr/contents.html](http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html).

**Starr Clark House (Oswego County):** Starr Clark's tin shop on Main Street in Mexico, New York. Starr Clark housed fugitives in this from the mid-1830s to the Civil War. James Chandler, who owned the brick bank next door, was also an abolitionist. It is believed that a tunnel ran from the basement of the tin shop to the house next door. The arrangement of rocks in the east wall of the tin shop basement suggests a possible filled-in tunnel. [http://www.oswego.edu/Acad\\_Dept/a\\_and\\_s/history/ugrr/contents.html](http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html).

**Macedonia A.M.E. Church (Queens County):** This church in Flushing frequently housed escaped slaves overnight in its basement and then slipped them out through a side door to move them on to their next stop. It was built in 1811 and has been renovated many times. The boiler room has remained under the chapel. <http://www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/freedom.html>

**1661 Browne House (Queens County):** This building, now a museum, was originally a meeting place for the Quakers. The Browne property once extended for 400 acres and contained many buildings where runaways were sheltered. <http://www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/freedom.html>

**A.M.E. Zion Church (Richmond County):** In the 1840's, fugitive slaves found sanctuary in the free Black community of Sandy Ground.

**Dr. Samuel McKenzie Elliot Home (Richmond County):** In the community now called Rossville there lived a well-know abolitionist whose house (built around 1850) is believed to have been an Underground Railroad station. It is said that a tunnel leads from the cellar down to the waterfront, but the new owners have yet to find it. The house is a New York City landmark.

**St. James AME Zion Church (Tompkins County):** St. James AME Zion church, built in 1836, is believed to be the oldest church in Ithaca, New York and one of the first AME Zion churches in the country. The church was an important transfer point for fugitive slaves en route to Canada. The congregation officially expressed its anti-slavery sentiments through the writings and preaching of pastors such as the Reverend Thomas James. The church, located at 116-118 Cleveland Avenue, Ithaca, New York, is open to the public. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground>

**Foster Memorial AME Zion Church (Westchester County):** Foster Memorial AME Zion Church was founded in 1860. During the Civil War, members of Foster AME provided food and shelter to fugitive slaves escaping to Canada and fugitive slaves who settled in Tarrytown. Foster AME Zion Church is located in Tarrytown, New York at 90 Wildey Street. It is open to the public. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground>

## Teaching Young Children About Slavery Using Literature

by Judith Y. Singer

One goal of social studies education is to help children learn to care about how people are treated in the world, whether we are talking about the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, the systematic removal of Native Americans to barren lands in the western part of the United States, the devastating repercussions of the Great Famine in Ireland, the calculated extermination of Jews in Nazi Europe, or the neglect of homeless people living on the sidewalks of New York City.

Slavery is a painful and frightening part of our history as Americans, a part which many elementary school teachers would rather not discuss. But our silences about slavery are potentially more damaging to the well-being of our children than the pain associated with learning about slavery. The silences hide from Black children who they are and prevent all children from thinking about what kind of people they want to be.

Children of all backgrounds need to feel empowered when they are faced with the fearful events of slavery, and I believe that stories about resistance to slavery and the hope of freedom are critical to giving them that sense of power. Children also have to learn about the pain of slavery, however, or they won't be able understand why people struggled as they did to become free.

The books described below, all picture books, are suitable for elementary school students of varying ages. They were selected because of the different ways they help us think about hope and struggle, as well as their extraordinary illustrations. Most of the books can be read to children in grades kindergarten through second grade with appropriate discussion and interpretation from their teachers.

*In the Time of the Drums* by Kim L. Siegelson (1999), illustrated by Brian Pinkney. New York: Hyperion.

"In the long ago time before now. . . men and women and their children lived enslaved." So begins the story of Twi, an Ibo conjure woman enslaved in the Georgia South Sea Islands and a little boy, Mentu, whom she is raising to be "strong-strong." Twi teaches Mentu to play the drums and to sing the songs of Africa, and she tells him that unless he is strong, his memories of who he is will slip away. She admonishes Mentu, "Takes a mighty strength not to forget who you are. Where you come from. To help others remember it, too."

This story helps children see that the Africans brought to the U. S. to work as slaves were people with rich cultures and significant skills. It is one of many stories about a magical escape from slavery, using supernatural powers begotten in Africa. Twi escapes with a newly arrived boatload of Ibo people, who reputedly walk beneath the water back to their homes across the sea. Mentu remains on the island, helping others become "strong-strong" by passing down the songs, stories and music of Africa.

*Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* by Deborah Hopkinson (1993), illustrated by James Ransome. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Dragonfly Books.

This story provides the reader with some windows into the daily life of a slave. It begins by portraying the sorrow Sweet Clara feels when she is sent away from her mother to work in the fields. "When I got there, I cried so much they thought I was never gon' eat or drink again. I didn't want to leave my mother." As she adapts to her new home, we see Clara picking cotton in the fields with Young Jack. Then Aunt Rachel teaches her how to sew so that she can become a seamstress and work in the Big House. Children can see in this book that slaves did different kinds of work, some of which was highly skilled. Clara applies her skills as a seamstress to sewing a map which she believes will lead her and Young Jack to freedom.

The quilt map may actually help Clara and Young Jack find freedom, or it may help them dream of freedom. Either way, the quilt is a symbol of hope. At the end of the book, the dream continues as Clara tells us, "Sometimes I wish I could sew a quilt that would spread over the whole land, and the people just follow the stitches to freedom, as easy as taking a Sunday walk."

*A Place Called Freedom* by Scott Russell Sanders (1997), illustrated by Thomas B. Allen. New York: Aladdin.

This is the story of a town in Canada created by freed Blacks and runaway slaves in the mid-1800's. A freed slave named Starman from Tennessee brings his family to Canada where he begins to farm with supplies and help

from a Quaker family. The farm grows into a town as Starman makes trips back and forth to Tennessee to bring back family and friends who were left behind. The narrator describes the skills that former slaves brought with them. “Papa could grow anything, and he could handle horses, and he could build a barn or a bed.” Mama “could sew clothes that fit you like the wind.” Others who came to the town were “carpenters and blacksmiths, basket weavers and barrel makers.” When the railroad runs tracks through the town, the townspeople have to give it a name. They decide to call it Freedom, as a reminder to all that they have left slavery behind them.

*The Wagon* by Tony Johnston (1996), illustrated by James E. Ransome. New York: Mulberry Paperback.

“Like all my family, birth to grave, my skin made me a slave.” Black people did not suffer slavery easily. This book conveys the deep anger a young boy feels at being a slave. Part of the appeal of the book is that the boy continuously expresses his anger. Even while he helps his father build a beautiful wagon, he yearns to be free to go where he pleases. When he hears stories of battles, he hacks at the wagon with an ax in his frustration at not being able to join the Union army. “I got striped good for that” he tells us.

“Then everything changed. The President wrote some words one day. We had gone to bed slaves. But we woke up free.” The boy’s father asks Master for the wagon he and his son built. As the family rides away from the plantation in the wagon, they learn that President Lincoln has been shot. At the end of the story, as their first free act, the boy and his family take the wagon to Washington to say good-bye to Mr. Lincoln.

*The Red Comb* by Fernando Picó (1991), illustrated by María Antonia Ordóñez. New York: Troll Medallion.

This story takes place in Puerto Rico in the mid-eighteenth century, when slavery was legal but there were also towns of former slaves who had escaped from neighboring islands. The story tells of two women who use their wits to help a runaway slave escape from a slave-catcher. The villagers, eager to earn eight pesos for helping to capture the runaway, are taken to task by Rosa Bultrón, who asks if they have “forgotten that our grandparents came to this island on a tiny, water-logged boat after fleeing from an Englishman’s plantation in Antigua?” This story has an important message for children about caring for others and taking responsibility for one another.

*Follow the Drinking Gourd* by J. Winter (1988). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence (1993). New York: Aladdin. *Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad in the Sky* by Faith Ringgold (1992). New York: Crown.

The most persistent theme in children’s stories about slavery is escaping to freedom. Each of these three books is about escaping on the Underground Railroad. The first features a conductor named Peg Leg Joe who teaches slaves a song, “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” which helps them follow the North Star to freedom. The book provides the readers with words and music to this song so they can learn to sing it. *Harriet and the Promised Land* is illustrated by Jacob Lawrence, a renowned African American artist. The book is an introduction to his work as well as to Harriet Tubman, a famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. The third version of this story takes the protagonists, Cassie and her little brother Be Be on a magical journey into the past to learn about the bravery of conductors and passengers on the Underground Railroad. Children can benefit from reading all three of these stories and discussing their similarities and differences.

Other books to consider: *From Slave Ship to Freedom Road* by Julius Lester (1998), illustrated by Rod Brown. N.Y.: Puffin. *Freedom Child of the Sea* by Richardo Keens-Douglas (1995), illustrated by Julia Gukova. Toronto: Annick. *Freedom River* by Doreen Rappaport (2000), illustrated by Bryan Collier. N.Y.: Hyperion.



**Margaret Goff Clark (1991). *Freedom Crossing*. New York: Scholastic.**

Reviewed by Rachel Thompson

I teach in an urban middle school with students from a predominantly white, working class neighborhood that has had a recent influx of immigrants from Europe, Central and South America. Because issues of racial and ethnic prejudice and injustice remain current and sensitive in our community, teaching about slavery and the United States Civil War is one of the more difficult units for me to present in my classes.

I introduce the topic of slavery by asking students to discuss what they already know. Invariably, they think know a great deal about slavery, however, most of their knowledge is not accurate. I find that textbooks, which are usually dry and fact-laden, are little help in getting them to reconsider what they think and that most primary source documents are too difficult and long to read in class on a regular basis. On the other hand, historical fiction provides a means to examine historical events from multiple perspectives while piquing their curiosity and enthusiasm. One of the best books for this purpose is *Freedom Crossing* by Margaret Goff Clark.

*Freedom Crossing* is the story of young white girl named Laura who returns to her family's farm in western New York State after living with an aunt and uncle in Virginia. She discovers that her brother and a childhood friend are now conductors on the Underground Railroad and the farm is a station on the route to Canada. She must decide whether she is willing to violate fugitive slave laws and help a 12 year-old boy named Martin Paige escape to freedom. Based on their reading of this book, my students learn, on a very personal level they can identify with, how Blacks struggled to survive during slavery. They also learn how ordinary people like themselves can take responsibility for events going on around them and contribute to creating a more just world.

Students enjoy comparing the story in *Freedom Crossing* with events described by historical documents. The book reports one escape route for runaway slaves, so we compare the book's account with information and maps on the Underground Railroad. Why were some routes better than others? How did slaves find their way along these routes? What were their journeys like? How were they helped or hindered along the way? How did slaves send messages about routes? As an activity, we create our own Underground Railroad "maps."

In chapter six of *Freedom Crossing*, the author describes Martin's former master making him forget how to read. I use this as a starting point to explore laws about the education of slaves and living conditions under slavery. One topic students love to debate is the similarities and differences between Martin's attitude toward education and the attitudes of young people today.

One of the more powerful moments in the book is when Laura sees Martin's back, scarred from whippings. We use this scene to discuss how enslaved people were treated, what it meant to be a slave, and why people were so determined to runaway and secure freedom.

We finish the unit by discussing what students would have done if they were Laura and why. We also look at the way that life and attitudes about race have changed since the Civil War, what still needs to be changed, and how individuals can be involved in changing it. These discussions lead to an examination of child labor in the world today and what must be done to stop it.

## Slavery and Reconstruction in Literature for Middle and High School Students

by Sally Smith

The textbook treatment of the institution of slavery and its practice in the United States can provide a useful historical framework and a brief glimpse of the lives of slaves and Abolitionists. But due to coverage constraints, textbooks often exclude the previous history of enslaved people, stories of free Blacks living in the North, and stories of everyday resistance to bondage, as well as an examination of cultures that arose in slave quarters blending African and European customs and beliefs. Novels, memoirs and autobiographies can offer students access to these missing perspectives, while involving them in the emotional impact of these experiences. Historian Howard Zinn recommends their use to help students understand what it was like to be a slave, to be jammed into slave ships, and to be separated from your family. He wants students to “learn the words of people themselves, to feel their anger, their indignation.”

This review of literature for use in the study of the institution of slavery and its historical contexts in the United States focuses on the work of two African American authors whose books explore the socio-political, cultural and personal contexts of slavery and its aftermath. Joyce Hansen, an author of realistic fiction as well as historical and nonfiction books, has written widely on this period. Her books range from the carefully researched, fictionalized story of a West African boy kidnapped and sold into slavery in *The Captive*, to *Between Two Fires: Black Soldiers in the Civil War* and *Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves*, nonfiction works that address the Civil War and Reconstruction. Her work has received popular and critical acclaim including recognition as a notable book from the National Council for the Social Studies and Parents’ Choice and Coretta Scott King Honor Book Awards. While working in New York City middle schools, I had the opportunity to see enthusiastic and thoughtful responses to her historical fiction.

Virginia Hamilton has written widely in several genres for young adults, from mysteries with historical themes such as *The House of Dies Drear*, to contemporary fiction like *Sweet Whispers*, *Brother Rush*, and a fictional biography, *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Runaway Slave*. She has also collected, edited and introduced an anthology of folk tales, *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*.

Hamilton, like Hansen, is an African American author writing about Black history. Both authors emphasize the importance of their personal perspectives as they research and write about African American history. Hansen, speaking to students at several New York City schools, stated that she believed her own experience as an African American and a descendent of slave enabled her to look at and interpret primary source and secondary source data in a way that accentuates the meaning of a text. Hamilton, comparing her work to those of white writers, especially well-known Abolitionists, wrote, “I wanted readers to have a book in which the oppressed slave. . . was at the center of his own struggle.” In *Anthony Burns*, she gives readers that story.

As in other aspects of history, it is important to look beyond famous and familiar names and events to obtain an in depth understanding of a period and of the experiences of a people. This adds to the importance of including such books in the social studies curriculum.

### Books by Joyce Hansen

*The Captive* (1994). New York: Apple Books. Hansen used an early slave narrative to construct a fast paced novel about Kofi, an Ashanti chieftain’s son, sold into slavery and shipped to Massachusetts just after the Revolutionary War. Incorporating historical persons such as the Colonist Paul Cuffe, a Black ship owner, she tells the story of Kofi’s enslavement and eventual freedom, through the intervention of Cuffe and other free Blacks. The carefully researched story provides a vivid picture of post-colonial Massachusetts and the active community of free Blacks in Boston and other New England cities. Kofi is an engaging protagonist and his personal story and the historical context are skillfully interwoven. Recommended for grades 6-8.

*Which Way Freedom* (1986). New York: Camelot. Based on actual events including accounts of the First South Carolina Volunteers and the Massacre at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, this novel narrates the story of Obi, a young slave who’s life-long plan to escape and find his mother are realized as the Civil War begins. About to be sold during the upheaval at the first sign of war, he volunteers to serve in the Confederate Army until he is able to slip away to join the Union forces. The opening chapters picture daily life in slave quarters. A helpful and moving historical framework is provided by the quotations from primary sources that begin each chapter. Grades 6-8.

*Out From This Place* (1994). New York: Camelot. This novel continues the story begun in *Which Way Freedom*. It is told from the point of view of Easter, a young woman who was Obi's close friend. Set in the turbulent period of Reconstruction just after the end of the War, the story is based on events in South Carolina, the Sea Islands, and the coast of Florida. Easter finds herself working for wages for the government on an abandoned plantation. Determined to find Obi and others from her slave-times "family," she joins those wandering the roads looking for their kin. She eventually locates Obi and they help found New Canaan, an all-Black community based on an actual all-Black community that developed after the war. Recommended for grades 6-8.

*Bury Me Not in the Land of Slaves: African Americans in the Time of Reconstruction* (2000). New York: Franklin Watts. While the focus of this text is the period of Reconstruction, it provides a thorough and accessible background to first enslaved Africans in the colonies and the development of the institution of slavery in the North and the South. This history is enhanced by the inclusion of primary documents such as political cartoons from the period, slave narratives, maps, excerpts from government documents, photographs and illustrations from period newspapers and journals. The text also includes brief biographies of African Americans whose lives and or writings were critical to the period, such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Delaney, and Charlotte Forten. Recommended for grades 9-12 and adults.

### **Books by Virginia Hamilton**

*The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (2000). New York: Random House. All ages. Twenty-four stories organized according to theme and type, including "Tales from Bruh Rabbit"; "Tales from the Real, Extravagant, and Fanciful"; "Tales of the Supernatural"; and "The Running Ways and Other Slave Tales of Freedom." This beautifully illustrated collection is a winner of the Coretta Scott King Award. Hamilton uses the stories to examine the strength of the human spirit under oppression and the role of story in that setting. Stories from "The Running Ways" are of particular importance to the study of slavery in the South. The Bruh Rabbit tales echo the African Trickster Tales of the slaves' ancestors, brought to the new world and modified to fit new circumstances. Also available on audio tape. Recommended for grades 4-12.

*Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave* (1988). New York: Knopf. Hamilton's fictional biography of Burns, based on historical documents and accounts from the period. It provides a vivid picture of the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act on people who escaped to the North and tried to begin productive, normal lives. The text alternates between Burns' imagined memories of his life as a slave in South Carolina and his trial in Boston where he is charged with being a fugitive. The chapters detailing his experiences as a slave are poignant and harsh. The author includes selections from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and a bibliography. This text is an important contribution to understanding the range of experiences of slaves working on and off the farms and plantations of the South and the dangers they faced even when free in the North. Recommended for grades 7-9.

### **Suggested Activities for Students**

1. In *Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves*, Hansen describes the formation of the Confederacy when Lincoln became President in 1860. Imagine you are a foreign visitor to the United States. Using your knowledge of slavery and the plantation system, write: a) a detailed letter to a friend describing what life looks like in the North and the South; b) an article for your hometown paper describing the similarities and differences between Americans living in the Union and in the Confederacy.
2. Like most enslaved Africans, Obi and Easter were illiterate while living on the plantation. Imagine that Obi and Easter could read and write. Take on the voice of either Easter or Obi and write a journal of your experiences during one week of the time period discussed in one of the two books.
3. Using a web search and library and media resources, prepare a presentation for your classmates on one of the following historical topics. Your presentation should include visual aids. a) The First South Carolina Volunteers (Union Army) and the Twenty-fifth Corps (*Which Way Freedom*); b) New Canaan, a town based on an all-Black community formed in South Carolina just after the Civil War (*Out From This Place*).
4. Abolitionists had to decide whether to forcefully resist efforts to arrest escaped slaves like Arthur Burns. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper explaining your views on violating the Fugitive Slave Laws.

## Middle School Museum of Slavery Project

by Stephanie Hunte, Rachel Thompson and Robert Kurtz

We were able to integrate material from the *Social Science Docket* theme issue on “Slavery and the Northern States (Summer-Fall, 2001) in our classrooms to create a “Museum of Slavery” at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, that involved students from three middle schools (Turtlehook Middle School in Uniondale, New York; James Vernon Middle School in East Norwich, New York; and I.S. 119 in Queens, New York). The centerpiece of the exhibit was a “Wall of Memory: Memorializing the Pain of Slavery and the Hope for Freedom.” It consisted of over fifty white tee-shirts that had been torn, stained and dabbed with brown and red paint.



The shirts represented both the pain of the slaver’s lash and continuous resistance to bondage. Other exhibits included dioramas of slave life and the slave trade, symbolic representations of the artifacts of slavery, and replicas of slavery documents. Students from Turtlehook Middle School also presented an African dance and a short play based on Virginia Hamilton’s “The People Could Fly.”

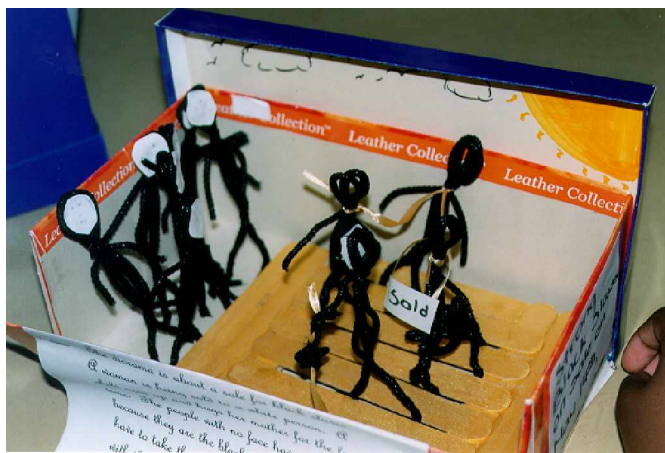
The student populations at the three schools are very different. Students in one school were largely middle-class and overwhelmingly African American, Caribbean and Latino/a. Students in the second school were working-class, white and Latino/a. Students in the third school were white and Asian American and from affluent families. For many, participation in the museum project was their first real interaction with students from other communities.

At the museum, exhibits were displayed on tables or hung up, along with a card that explained what it depicted. After every one had a chance to browse, each student or student team presented their exhibit to the entire group. At the end, students discussed with the group what they had learned from participation in the Museum of Slavery project. Many expressed surprise that students from other communities and ethnic groups had welcomed their involvement.

Each of the teachers approached preparation for the Museum of Slavery differently. While the class studied slavery, students at I.S. 119 in Queens worked outside of class, independently or in small groups, to create a series of 3-dimensional displays. Students at the East Norwich school worked in small teams and as a full class to create their exhibit. At Uniondale, the entire unit on slavery was organized as a package for student teams and the final team projects were made in class and used to assess student learning.



Diorama showing life in a West African village.



Diorama showing the trek to the coast for sale.

### A. Ms. Thompson's Slavery Museum Project Guidelines

Museums can inspire us to think about events that have taken place in the past. They can also invoke feelings and emotions in us about the sometimes harsh and disturbing events that have taken place in history. With this in mind, you are going to help create a "Museum of Slavery."

You will be working in groups to create your museum exhibit. Exhibits must be dioramas, replicas or any other 3-dimensional display (no posters). You are expected to be creative. The assignment requires that most of your work be done at home, therefore you will be allowed to choose your own groups. Groups should be no larger than 3 people. You may work independently, if you prefer. Themes for each group are listed below along with some ideas. Feel free to use a suggestion or think of your own! Include an information card to go along with your exhibit (like those at any museum).

The focus of your projects is slavery. Not just the history of slavery and slave trade that took place in the 17th and 18th centuries, but also the condition of life under slavery, the way those in slavery resisted, and slavery in the world today. You are expected to use your exhibit to further our understanding of human rights and the responsibility of the world to stop slavery and slave-like conditions.

#### Possible Themes:

1. Slave Trade - By the 1700's a network to trade enslaved people between Africa and the Americas was well-established. Recreate the conditions people endured on slave ships while in middle passage.
2. Horrors of Slavery - Many enslaved Africans who lived in servitude were subjected to harsh and unfair treatment. Create a replica of weapons or tools used to subjugate captives and control slaves.
3. Slave Resistance – Enslaved Africans fought against slavery in violent and non-violent ways. Recreate a scene of slave resistance like Harpers Ferry or an escape route taken to freedom such as on the Underground Railroad.
4. Contributions by African-Americans - Many African Americans overcame injustices and went on to make important contributions to the world. Recreate a scene such as Martin Luther King, jr.'s speech in Washington.
5. Monuments to African Americans - There are many monuments either already in existence or being proposed to honor African Americans. Create a model monument celebrating the struggle against slavery.
6. Slavery Today - Many people in the world are much less fortunate than we are and some still live under conditions of slavery. Create a scene representing slavery today.

### B. Ms. Hunte's "Slavery: A Hands-On Inquiry"

**Directions:** Our goal as a class is to understand why slavery developed in the Americas and the way it affected Africans, European Americans and the history of the United States. Students will be divided into groups of between four and five members. Each team should select four of the following inquiry stations and complete the activities in the packet for each station. This will take between two and three lessons. You will have an additional day to prepare your team's unit project.

**Assessment:** You will receive a group grade. Each team must complete an "analysis sheet" for each station that you visit. Each analysis sheet is worth a total of 25 points. In addition, each team must create and present to class a diorama or skit based on what you learned about slavery. This will be graded separately and is worth a total of 100 points.

#### Inquiry Stations:

- Video Clip: Students will watch scenes from the movie *Amistad* on the middle passage and read a document "A Slaver Describes the Atlantic Slave Trade." The group will complete an analysis sheet and for their project can write a skit in which enslaved Africans are able to testify against their capturers at a trial.
- Computer WebQuest: Students will visit bookmarked web sites with images of plantation life, the middle passage or a slave auction. The group will complete an analysis sheet and can create a diorama depicting one of the scenes.
- Fine Arts: Students will examine pictures of traditional and folk art and listen to songs that depict slave life. The group will complete an analysis sheet and for their project can create a diorama based on one of the pieces.



- **Folk Tales:** Students will read folk tales about slavery from Virginia Hamilton's book, "The People Could Fly." The group will complete an analysis sheet for each folk tale and for their project can write a skit based on one of the stories.
- **Primary Sources I and II:** Students will review charts, pictures, diagrams and other documents from the era of slavery. The group will complete an analysis sheet for each document.

**Constructed Responses:** Students will analyze charts, songs and documents. Groups must complete two of the following: write a "slave song" in a modern style using information from the documents; write a letter to an advocate of slavery challenging their views; draw pictures illustrating the experience of Solomon Northup; write a newspaper article about the discovery and impact of the cotton gin.

### C. Mr. Kurtz's Museum of Slavery Project

**Cooperative group size:** 3 or 4 students (For this project teams will need to work outside of school so select group members you can easily meet). Each group will choose an activity and select a project coordinator. Your final project will include a report on how effectively you worked together as a group. This report should be signed by each team member.

#### Project Objectives

1. To research and share knowledge about the slave trade and slavery in the United States.
  2. To have a better understanding of the lives of enslaved people in the United States.
  3. To learn about both the horrors of slavery and the struggle for freedom.
- To learn about the role played by our local community and New York State in the debate over slavery.

#### Suggested Project Activities:

1. Write a newspaper or television editorial on the issue of slavery.
2. Design a giant poster explaining an aspect of the slave trade or slavery.
3. Create a three dimensional model or diorama of a slave auction, slave ship, or a plantation. Include a written description of your exhibit that describes its historical importance.
4. Make reproductions of the artifacts of slavery including the tools and weapons of the slave trade. Include a "museum card" describing the tool or weapon and how it was used.
5. Collect documents to make an original document-based test.
6. Help design and create the "Wall of Memory" with bloody, torn and stained t-shirts.

**Materials to be used for Research:** Textbooks, reference books, encyclopedias, atlases, library books, the internet.



**Materials to be used for creating three dimensional models and reproductions:** Be as creative as possible. Make the dioramas as large as possible. Make reproductions look real.



### How Much Is That Worth Today?

**Source:** Economic History Service ([http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd/dollar\\_answer.php](http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd/dollar_answer.php))

It is often difficult to determine the value of things from the past. Historians do not always agree on what things cost then and how much that price would be in today's money. This activity sheet will help you estimate the value of things from the past.

In *The Slave Trade* (Simon & Schuster, 1997, pp. 807-808), Hugh Thomas placed the cost of purchasing an enslaved African in the United States at \$360 (\$9,000 in 2002 dollars) in 1850 and \$500 (\$10,000 in 2002 dollars) in 1860. According to historian John Hope Franklin (*From Slavery to Freedom*, 4th edition, NY: Knopf, 1974, p. 133) the sale price of enslaved Africans in the United States South peaked in 1860 just prior to the Civil War. He estimated that a male adult "prime" field hand would have sold for \$1,000 in Virginia or \$1,500 in New Orleans. In today's dollars, that would be the equivalent of \$20,000 in Virginia or \$30,000 in New Orleans, the equivalent of a mid-sized car.

A web site sponsored by the Economic History Service allows us to compare purchasing power of money in the United States economy from 1665 to the present. You can use this website to figure out how much products produced in the past would be sold for today. You can also use it to understand the value of enslaved workers in the pre-Civil War United States economy.

Year	Value of 100 dollars in 2002 US dollars	Same purchasing power as one 2002 US dollar	To find the value in 2002 US dollars multiply cost by:
1790	\$1956	.05	20
1800	\$1425	.07	14.25
1810	\$1454	.07	14.25
1820	\$1526	.07	14.25
1830	\$1938	.05	20
1840	\$2669	.05	20
1850	\$2289	.04	25
1860	\$2152	.05	20
1870	\$1370	.07	14.25
1880	\$1749	.06	16.65
1890	\$1974	.05	20
1900	\$2130	.05	20
1910	\$1887	.05	20
1920	\$896	.11	9
1930	\$1071	.09	11
1940	\$1281	.08	12.5
1950	\$747	.13	7.7
1960	\$608	.16	6.25
1970	\$464	.22	4.5
1980	\$218	.46	2.2
1990	\$138	.73	1.35
2000	\$104	.96	--
2002	\$100	\$1.00	--