



INTERNATIONAL
STORYTELLING CENTER

**Curriculum Guide for Freedom Stories Discussion
“What You Don’t Know (But Should) About Appalachian Slavery”**

Notes about this guide:

First, it is just that—a guide. It is meant to offer suggestions for how you might approach these important yet sensitive topics in your classroom, as well as ideas for how you might augment existing curriculum in your classroom. Please adapt it as necessary to fit your classroom’s needs.

Second, while it is aimed for 10th grade, many of the activities can easily be adapted both for lower and higher grades, and we encourage you to do so.

Third, since the International Storytelling Center is based in Tennessee, we have used the Tennessee state academic standards for Social Studies as our guide, but have also included Common Core standards where appropriate in an attempt to provide some reciprocity between and among state curriculums. Please feel free to use your own state standards in place of Tennessee’s or Common Core’s.

Fourth, our collective understanding of the subject matter covered in this and the other Freedom Stories Curriculum Guides is ever-evolving as we unearth forgotten narratives and seek out more complete truths. As such, there may be instances where certain instructional approaches are no longer useful, or where certain resources are no longer applicable. We encourage you to keep this in mind as you use this guide and adapt activities with new information as it becomes available.

Last, we welcome your feedback about this guide and its role in your classroom. Please reach out to us at FreedomStories@StorytellingCenter.net with comments, questions, and suggestions.

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| Lesson Title | What You Don’t Know (But Should) About Appalachian Slavery |
| Grade Band | 10th |
| Standard(s) | <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.08:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the role slavery played in the development of nationalism and sectionalism, including the fugitive slave laws. <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.11:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare and contrast African American communities in the North and South, with emphasis on those in rural and urban areas. <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.12:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe and analyze various experiences of African American families in the Antebellum U.S. <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1, Key Ideas and Details</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. |

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| | <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4, Craft and Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6, Craft and Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts. |
| Lesson Objective(s) | <p>The students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain ways that slavery in Appalachia differed from slavery in other parts of the United States and reasons that was the case. List industries in which enslaved people often worked in Appalachia. Explain how the practice of leasing often meant that industries within free states maintained a connection with slavery. Define words connected with industries prevalent within Appalachia in which enslaved labor was used. Demonstrate an understanding of how enslaved people were involved with exploration and innovation. |
| Essential Understanding/ Essential Question | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How can already-existing ideas influence perceptions of history in and about specific regions? How do the forms that Appalachian slavery took influence Appalachia, and the world, today? How did the ways slavery occurred in Appalachia influence the way other regions practiced, or did not practice, their ideals about slavery? |
| Lesson Activities | <p>Warm-up Activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> After students get settled upon entering the class, begin by asking questions about students' perceptions and knowledge of slavery in the antebellum South. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Where do you think slavery was prevalent? What do you know about the industries and conditions in which enslaved people worked? What do you believe was the impact of enslavement on families? Move from the idea of the overall antebellum South to the region of Appalachia, using the Appalachian County Map from the Appalachian Regional Commission, to help students develop an overview of how Appalachia is defined geographically. Then ask students what they know about slavery in Appalachia. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know whether slavery was prevalent in Appalachia? Were the industries and conditions in which enslaved people worked the same as within other regions? Was there any difference in the impact of enslavement on families in Appalachia? Use the students' responses to help transition to the lesson. |

Activity 1: Introduce students to the changing demographics of enslavement in the United States from the early days of the Republic to the days just before the Civil War.

1. Begin the discussion by sharing the PowerPoint presentation resource from the "[What You Don't Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#)" session page.
2. Discuss the differences between the prevalent understanding of slavery in the American South and the common attributes of slavery in Appalachia.
3. Discuss the differences between the prevalent understanding of slavery in the American South and the common attributes of slavery in Appalachia, including general size of land holdings; the industries in which enslaved people worked; and the practice of leasing.
4. As an all-class activity, compile a list of vocabulary pertinent to the industries that were common in Appalachia, including such words as the following:
 - a. Blacksmith
 - b. Steel driving
 - c. Gandy dancer
5. Using the discussion of the variety of experiences of enslaved people in Appalachia found in the "[What You Don't Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#)" (1:00:05-1:05:57), highlight that slavery in Appalachia was not defined by homogeneity.

Activity 2: Transition to the idea that the experiences of enslaved people from Appalachia was varied, using the life of York as an example.

1. Ask students what they know about the Lewis and Clark expedition using such questions as the following:
 - a. What president commissioned the expedition?
 - b. Who led the expedition?
 - c. How many people were part of the expedition?
 - d. What route did the expedition travel?
 - e. What did the expedition accomplish?
2. Compile a list of facts that the students know about the expedition.
3. Using the [resources from the National Archives](#), fill in any gaps in overall knowledge of the expedition.
4. Then remind students of the fact that, in the slide presentation from earlier in the lesson, there was mention of an enslaved man named York who was from Appalachia and was an important part of the expedition.
5. Play the part of the presentation "[What You Don't Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#)" in which poet Frank X. Walker shares his work surrounding York and his story (10:48-29:05) and the research he completed in order to compose this work (45:19-50:33).
6. In class discussion, ask students to consider the implications of York's and William Clark's long-standing knowledge of each other, reportedly beginning when they were both children.
 - a. How does their story remind us of ways that the lives of those who were enslaved were entwined with the lives of slaveholders?

- b. How do you think their knowing each other from childhood might impact ways in which power differentials were experienced?
- 7. Discuss with students the influence the lack of extensive numbers of written narratives of enslaved people has on our understanding of slavery in Appalachia and other locations, using the portion of the “What You Don’t Know (But Should) About Appalachian Slavery” recording in which Ilene Evans discusses the telling of stories from narratives (34:27-41:04).
 - a. What influence does the lack of written narratives have on the importance of oral narratives and stories?
 - b. Where are places that oral narratives and stories might be located?
- 8. Introduce the idea that, though for too long people have not known about York and his story, there are those for whom there was even less of a record—such as York’s wife, for example—and that, whether people’s stories were recorded or told, their lives were still lived, their experiences still occurred, and they still are part of the story of Appalachia and the United States of America.
 - a. Are there ways of uncovering the often-unheard stories of enslaved people?
 - b. Are there ways of discovering clues to the lives of those whose stories were not fully recorded?

Activity 3: Transition to focus on the work of African Americans on railroads throughout Appalachia, from those who were enslaved to those who continued this work after the end of the Civil War.

1. Remind students of the term “Gandy Dancers” that was discussed earlier in the lesson.
2. Watch the film clip of retired Gandy Dancers found in the presentation “[What You Don’t Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#)” (6:46-8:15).
 - a. What use might music have been to Gandy Dancers working on the railroad?
 - b. What might we learn from the choices of songs the Gandy Dancers sang?
3. Either tell the story of John Henry or provide students with time to read “[The Legend of John Henry](#),” found at the National Park Service.
4. After telling the story or having students read the story, play the song “[John Henry](#).”
5. Lead class discussion with students about the possible connections of this song to the work and other songs sung by enslaved people, such as those found at the [Library of Congress](#).

Concluding Activity (choose one or more)

Activity 1: Music and History Discussion

1. Ask students to break into groups of 3-4.
2. Instruct students to compare and contrast what we know of the history of John Henry with the song that was played in class.

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ask the students to discuss the messages that come through the song. 4. Lead the class in an all-group discussion based on each small group's findings. <p><u>Activity 2: Performative Group Project</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assign students to work in groups of 3-4. 2. Provide each group of students with time in-class, while encouraging additional time to be used outside of class, to read and discuss portions of Frank X. Walker's poetry about the experiences of York. 3. Instruct students to choose one or two poems, with a combined length of 5-7 minutes, to perform for the class in a way that they choose. 4. Instruct students that all members of the group should be involved in this process in some way, including such possibilities as the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Performing b. Preparing artwork c. Choosing costuming 5. Invite students to perform their selected poems in class on a predetermined day. 6. After the presentations, lead discussion around insights that have been gained from presenting the poetry. <p><u>Activity 3: Creative Writing Activity</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite students to write a one-page story from the perspective of someone who experienced enslavement in Appalachia. 2. Ask the students to make specific choices about the story by utilizing such questions as who, what, when, where, and how about the person whose story they are telling. 3. When students turn in their papers, invite students to volunteer to read their stories aloud. 4. Discuss what insights and increased understanding were gained from writing the story. <p><u>Activity 4: Research Project</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give the students an assignment to research a topic about Appalachian slavery about which they have questions. 2. Provide time within or outside of class time. 3. Have students make a list of information they learned. 4. Provide time for a class discussion in which students share what they researched and make connections between new information and what had already been learned in this lesson. |
| Materials | <p><u>Lesson-Specific Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appalachian County Map from the Appalachian Regional Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a visual display of the size and scope of Appalachia for the warm-up activity. • "Slavery in Appalachia PPT" from ISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides information for beginning discussion about slavery in Appalachia. |

- International Storytelling Center’s discussion recording, “[What You Don’t Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#)”
 - The recording of this session is a key resource for use at a variety of points throughout this lesson.
- “[Lewis and Clark Expedition](#)” from the National Archives
 - This website gives an overview of the Lewis and Clark expedition and images of primary source documents related to the expedition, all of which can be used during the lesson discussion of this expedition.
- “[The Legend of John Henry](#)” from the National Park Service
 - This resource gives an account of the story of John Henry, which provides instructional material for the section of the lesson that focuses on railroad work.
- “[John Henry](#)” song
 - The recording of the song found at this website is instrumental to the portion of the lesson focused on John Henry.
- “[African-American Spirituals](#)” from the Library of Congress
 - This resource contains information about music that was important in the lives of enslaved people in the antebellum period and can supplement discussion of both the Gandy Dancers’ songs and “John Henry.”

Books for Further Study

- *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, edited by John C. Inscoe
 - This book provides key insight through numerous essays into the African American experience in Appalachia.
- *Race, War and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* by John C. Inscoe
 - This book explores the complexities of race and experiences in Appalachia during the Civil War.
- *Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York* by Frank X. Walker
 - This book is one from which Frank X. Walker read in the “What You Don’t Know (But Should) About Appalachian Slavery” session recording.
- *When Winter Come: The Ascension of York* by Frank X. Walker
 - This book is one from which Frank X. Walker read in the “What You Don’t Know (But Should) About Appalachian Slavery” session.

Websites for Further Study

- “[Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project](#)” 1936 to 1938
 - This resource provides a plethora of narratives from people who had experienced being enslaved.
- “[Antebellum Appalachian African-Americans](#)” at Appalachian State University’s Special Collections Research Center
 - This website provides a helpful list of resources for further study on the African-American experience in Appalachia before and during the Civil War.
- The [Heritage Alliance](#) of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This website provides access to online exhibitions and primary source documents about the history of parts of Appalachia, including a focus on stories that have often been overlooked. ● “Voices from the Earth” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This website highlights the work of Ilene Evans, who tells the often-untold stories of many people from the past. |
| Accommodations | <p>In addition to discussion and multiple activity options (as noted above in the lesson plan), there can be the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. use of photographs and other images; 2. reading aloud of written sources or otherwise providing sources in an audio format; and 3. alternative formats for presenting culminating activity assignments, such as written, oral, or artistic options in addition to the options given above. |