

Writing in First Person about the Atlantic Slave Trade

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: Grammar and Composition

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Student Objectives

- Discuss general information about the Atlantic slave trade.
- Review facts about the St. John revolt, and brainstorm a list of people involved in the rebellion.
- Write a personal account from the point of view of one person involved in the revolt.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Slavery, Society, and Apartheid*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Slave Revolt
 - Atlantic Slave Trade
 - Apartheid Takes Hold
 - The End of Apartheid
- Video on *unitedstreaming: Slave Ship -*.
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- June, 1839: Singbeh Pieh (Joseph Cinqué) Leads a Slave Revolt Aboard the *Amistad*
 - The Story of Olaudah Equiano
- Computer with Internet access
 - Paper, pen or pencil

Procedures

1. After watching the program, discuss the Atlantic slave trade. Begin by telling students that from 1500 to 1870, about 11 million Africans were captured and taken on ships to the Americas. Have students answer the following questions based on what they learned in the program:
 - What was the triangular trade? (the slave trade connecting Africa, the Americas, and Europe)
 - Why were slaves considered “black gold”? (They provided inexpensive labor for plantations in the Americas, making them valuable like gold.)
 - Were the slaves always captured by Europeans? Explain. (No; they were often captured by other African groups.)
 - What were some goods traded for slaves? (cloth, metalware, firearms, ammunition, rum)
 - Was the slave trade that began in the 16th century Africa’s first experience with slavery? Explain. (No; African nations had a long history of capturing and trading other groups into slavery.)
 - What was the middle passage? What was it like? (The middle passage was the dangerous voyage from Africa to the Americas. It was a very difficult journey; slaves fell to disease and brutal treatment. Sometimes nearly half in a ship died.)
 - Describe the experience of slaves traded at St. Thomas Island and other markets. (They were inspected like cattle, branded, and often separated from their families.)
2. Next, review facts about St. John island featured in the program:
 - Where is St. John island? (in the Caribbean Sea)
 - Why were African slaves traded to St. John island in the 1700s? (to plant and harvest sugarcane)
 - What European country established St. John as its colony? (Denmark)
 - What significant event took place there in 1733? (Slaves led a revolt against the plantation owners.)
 - Who led the revolt? (two chieftains from the African nation Akwamu)
 - Did the Akwamu leaders who led the rebellion want to abolish slavery? (No, they intended to take over the island, enslaving anyone who was not with them.)
 - How did the Akwamu leaders spread the word of the revolt to the Akwamu on plantations and in remote jungle camps? (talking drums)
 - Were all the slaves on St. John part of the rebellion? (No, some slaves even warned colonists of the rebel attacks.)
 - Did the slaves end up in control of St. John Island? (No, they were overthrown in less than a year.)

3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of people who were affected by the rebellion. Write their answers on the board, along with a brief description of the individuals' roles. Possible answers include:
 - Governor Philip Gardelin (in charge of sugarcane business; put strict slave code into effect)
 - Johannes Sodtmann (plantation owner and Gardelin's son-in-law; first target in the 1733 rebellion)
 - Akwamu Chieftains (enslaved leaders of Africa's Akwamu nation; led the revolt)
 - Danish soldier (escaped the garrison attacked by rebels)
 - Slaves (warned colonists of rebels and helped them escape)
 - Kroyer Family (owned small plantation on Brown Bay; killed in rebel attack; their two young male slaves were rescued)
 - Unnamed female slave (joined the rebellion at Brown Bay)
 - Peter Durlloo (plantation owner; the battle between the rebels and remaining colonists took place at his plantation)
 - Free Negro Corps (slaves recruited to fight the rebels; rewarded with property)
 - Mingo Tamarind (captain of a group from the Free Negro Corps; known for his harsh and effective command)
4. Ask students to consider how the people on this list would have viewed the St. John Revolt. What were their different motivations, risks, or fears? Have students choose one person from the list above to write a personal account of the revolt. The account should answer the following questions (considered from the selected person's point of view):
 - What is your role, in general and in the revolt?
 - Do you support the revolt? Why or why not?
 - What do you stand to gain or lose?
 - Do you feel the attacks on the plantation owners are justified?
 - What do you see as the ideal outcome of the revolt?
5. Have students share their accounts with the class. Then, discuss the motivations and feelings of the different people or groups. Did all the slaves participate in the revolt? Was the revolt meant to abolish slavery on St. John? Were white colonists the only enemy the rebels faced?
6. Conclude by talking about the significance of the St. John Revolt. If the slaves did not end up in control of the island, why is it important? (St. John was the first black state in the Americas; it was the first black revolution to occur in America.) Why do islanders still celebrate the revolt today? (They view the slave revolt as an expression of the human spirit; it left a legacy of strength.)

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; produced a complete report, including all of the requested information; accurately summarized their partner's report and cited three interesting, relevant points.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; produced an adequate report, including most of the requested information; satisfactorily summarized their partner's report and cited two relevant points.
- **1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions; created an incomplete report with little or none of the requested information; were not able to summarize their partner's report or recall any interesting, relevant points.

Vocabulary

colony

Definition: A country or area that is ruled by another country

Context: In 1733, St. John Island was a colony of Denmark.

middle passage

Definition: The dangerous sea voyage from Africa to the Caribbean

Context: More than 11 million enslaved Africans were taken to the Americas through the middle passage.

triangular trade

Definition: The slave trade that connected Africa, the Americas, and Europe

Context: The Danish bought slaves, with the cash they made selling Caribbean rum, in the triangular trade.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics, Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Gathers and uses information for research purposes

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
 - Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>