



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume II: Everyday Life in Early America

Our Side of the Story: African Americans Share Their Experiences of Slavery

Guide for Curriculum Unit 03.02.02
by Lorna Edwards

African American history is more than slavery, emancipation, and the civil rights movement. In this interdisciplinary unit, students will visit the story of the African Diaspora and find out what people of African descent did for themselves despite the hardships they endured during slavery. As students conduct research, they will focus on examining autobiographical accounts of slaves in order to learn what it was like to be a slave in North America. A portion of the research will focus on the African American subculture in eighteenth century New England.

The unit will begin with exploring the use of oral tradition of folktales in order to gain a better understanding of how slaves maintained their pride even though there was much pain. Students will embark on an imaginary journey through role-play so that they will be able to empathize with the slaves' experiences. As students demonstrate literary skills required to identify and analyze visual, oral, and written sources related to slavery in the North America, they will also enhance their listening and note-taking skills. It is my intention that upon completion of this unit, students will learn how point-of-view influences our understanding of history. Hopefully, they will also gain a new perspective and greater appreciation for people living in a world different from theirs.

(Recommended for Reading, Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, grades 6-8.)

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