



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2022 Volume II: The Long Fight for a Free Caribbean, 1700s-1959

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## **Imprint of Transatlantic Caribbean Slavery on the United States Using Narrative**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 22.02.02  
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Social Studies involves the study of land, people, culture, events as well as the changing of hands of political power. Economics is also a major element of social studies. Humanity's desire for power and wealth has often impacted nations and their people.

The transatlantic slave trade involves many of these themes, including Caribbean influence on the United States. This unit will be a 4-to-6- week unit. It is part of the eighth-grade American history curriculum. Students will use research and narratives in this process to look at economics, enslaved people in the United States and in the Caribbean and the impact on one another. We will explore the 1600s until the 1900s.

Through their research, students will discover that much of the information that they need to complete this cannot be found in their Social Studies textbooks. In some classes students learn about narratives, memoirs, and diaries briefly when studying important figures in history – presidents, human rights and civil rights leaders, etc. However, they are not often used as regular tools in the classroom. Students will research the narratives of enslaved people from Africa who were placed in the Caribbean as well as in the United States. They will also research the narratives for those involved directly in the settling of colonies and the trade of force/enslaved Africans, African Caribbeans and Indigenous people.

Essential questions for this unit are:

- How, if at all, was slavery in the United States related to Caribbean slavery?
- How do narratives change society/popular opinion?
- How do a group or set of people become enslaved by another? What are the factors that influenced that enslavement ?
- How did economics affect the enslavement of Africans, African Caribbeans and indigenous people?
- Where did the remnants of Caribbean slavery exist in the United States?
- How are the narratives of enslaved people from the United States as well as narratives of Caribbean and slave different from Social Studies textbooks?
- How are people affected by marginalization and erasure?
- How does a dominant narrative develop?

Students will research narratives. Life stories and events will be important part of their research. Their reading of narratives students should be able to gain a more accurate account of the transatlantic slave trade.

Students have a choice of several culminating projects. One project is to create or compile songs that would represent a soundtrack of the enslaved person's life, based on narratives. Another project is to map the route of African Caribbean slaves and their arrival in the United States. An additional culminating project involves having students compile a repository of narrative-based on the research. This should be a living digital repository.

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