

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute 1992 Volume II: Writing and Re-writings of the Discovery and Conquest of America

Adventure in the Caribbean Effects of the discovery of Haiti-Martinique and Guadeloupe

Curriculum Unit 92.02.04 by Iole A. Apicella

During Columbus' second voyage, in 1493, nine islands were discovered in the Caribbean Sea. Several accounts were given about such conquests. Some writings are by Columbus himself but others are by important writers and philanthropists of the time who included stories of heroism and abuses endured by the natives to attempt to awaken the inner feelings of the reader.

The lack of specific information about these islands, known all over the world for their beauty aroused my curiosity. Who were the original natives? Were they sociable or did they mistrust the newcomers? How did the newcomers treat the natives?

This unit will be therefore devoted to the islands of Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe with the purpose of widening the knowledge of the past, the fights for freedom on these islands after the conquest and the political and economic role that they played after their discovery.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To learn about the discovery of these islands.
- 2. To learn about the history of these lands.
- 3. To learn about important men and women in Haiti Martinique and Guadeloupe.
- 4. To learn more about slavery.
- 5. To learn about the fights that took place to abolish slavery from the islands.

This unit has been designed especially for the Junior-High level students who are learning about French culture and its expansionism. I believe that such unit will be very beneficial in increasing the geographical skills as well as the awareness of certain aspects of the discovery of the American Continent that created misery and pain.

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In order to achieve my objectives I will include a brief background of each island as well as small autobiographies of the men and women who played an important role in the development and the freedom of the three islands. The different stages of the discovery will be examined and discussed as well as the rebellion of the natives and the final solution. Slavery will also be examined under the economic, political and the social aspect and the long term effects that it would play in the American Continent.

HAITY (Hayti or Haiti)

Located on the western third of the Caribbean Island Espanola. Name of the original Indians Arawaks who called the island Quisqueya or Hayti.

Map of the costs of Hispaniola taken from the world map by Juan de la Cosa (1500).

(figure available in print form)

On December 6, 1492 Columbus landed on the island that he would call Espanola. The natives of the island were called Arawaks. They had many gold objects and being very curious about what the Spaniards were wearing they overcame their shyness and were very willing to trade. The greediness of Columbus' men was so evident that the Navigator himself decided to restrict the trading.

Columbus established a fort that he called the Natividad. The purpose of the fort would be to attend to all the problems connected with the taking over of the island as well as to house the Spaniards who would be left behind.

The following letter written by Columbus shows the first encounter with the natives:

"And as soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island which I found, I took by force some of them in order that they might learn [Castilian] and give me information of what they had in those parts; it so worked out that they soon understood us, and we them, either by speech or signs, and they have been verse serviceable. I stir have them with me, and these are still of the opinion that I come from the sky, in spite of all the intercourse which they have had with me, and they were the first to announce this wherever I went, and the others went running from house to house and to the neighboring towns with loud cries of, Come! See the people from the sky!

Then all came, men and women, as soon as they had confidence in us, so that not one, big or little, remained behind, and all brought something to eat and drink, which they gave with marvelous love."

Accounts of the conquest were also given by *Bartolomé* de la Casa who later realized how much the natives had been abused and, although he had fought the Indians previously he tried to help their cause by convincing their capturers to change their behavior.

"I have given them of all that I had, such as cloth and many other things, without receiving anything for it; but they are like that, timid beyond cure. It is true that after they have been reassured and have lost this fear, theta are so artless and so free with ad they possess, that no one would believe it without having seen it. Of anything they have, if you ask them for it, they never say no; rather they invite the person to share it, and show as much love as if they were giving their hearts; and whether the thing be of value or of small price, at once they are content with whatever little thing of whatever kind may be given to them. I for-bade that they should be given things so worthless as pieces of broken crockery and broken glass, and ends of straps, although when they were able to get them, they thought they had the best jewel in the world; thus it was ascertained that a sailor for a strap received gold to the weight of two and a half castellanos, and others much more for other things which were worth much less; yea, for new blancas, for them they would give all that they had, although it might be two or three castellanos' weight of gold or an arrova or two of spun cotton; they even took pieces of the broken hoops of the wine casks and, like animals, gave what they

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had, so that it seemed to me to be wrong and I forbade it, and I gave them a thousand good, pleasing thongs which I had brought in order that they might be fond"

In 1516 Las Casa was appointed Protector of the Indians and started writing extensively about them in his first book History of the Indies.

By the end of the 16th century most of the 1.000.000 Indians had been wiped out. The French had initiated their infiltration of the island at the hands of the French Buccaneers from Tortuga Island. They were able to drive out the few Spaniards left on the Island and in 1664 Fort de Paix had been established.

In 1697 the Treaty of Ryswich recognized the French possession of the Western Third which the French called Saint Domingue. This island was at first very famous for the tobacco crop. This product was considered very beneficial by the natives who used it to relax. When the Spaniards tried it they found it intoxicating and immediately understood the value of such a discovery, They forced the natives to work as slaves to ensure a successful and continuous and plentiful crop. The combination of the inhuman conditions and their unwillingness to obey the tyrannical rulers drove the Arawaks to the edge of extinction. In order to cope with the lack of workers the French introduced African slaves as labourers and by the 18th century in addition to tobacco the island was also producing sugar, coffee, indigo cotton and cacao.

TOBACCO The common name, tobacco, derived from the word applied both to the tube used by the Indians for inhaling the smoke and to the cylinder of leaf prepared for smoking. The Indians believed it possessed medicinal properties and they used it also in ceremonials. The pipe was an emblem of peace and friendship. When some calamity, or joy, or some great need occurred, they smoked the pipe together. The smoking of the pipe had to follow a very precise ritual: the medicine man lighted it first with a coal from the fire and pointed it toward the sky as a gesture to the gods, he then passed it to the man seating on his right who took a long pull at the pipe, puffed out the smoke, and passed to the next person. The circle of the persons smoking symbolized the path of the sun.

In the "Shorte and Briefe Narration" describing Jacques Cartier's second voyage to America in 1535-36, it can be found the following description about the tobacco and its use among the Indians:

"There groweth also a certain kind of herbs, whereof in summer the Indians make great provision for all the years, making great account of it, and only cause it to be dried in the sunne, then weare it about their neckes, wrapped in a little beastes skinne made like a little bagge, with a hollow peece of stone or wood like a pipe; then when they please they make pouder of it, and then put it in one of the ends of the said Cornet or pipe, and laying a Cole of fire upon it, at the other end sucke so long, that they fill out their bodies full of smoke till that it cometh out of their mouth and nostrils, even as out of the tonnell of a chimney. They say that this doth keep them warme and in healthe; they never go without smoke of it about them. We ourselves have tryed the same smoke, and having put it in our mouth, it seemed almost as hot as Pepper."

The extension of the tobacco couture began with its introduction to the courts of the time. France in 1556; Portugal in 1558 followed by Spain in 1559 and finally England in 1565.

It is during the same century that the word Nicotiana was first used in honour of Jean Nicot, French ambassador at Lisbon, Portugal who sent some N. tabacum to the gueen of France between 1556 and 1580.

The increased commercial productions of the crops demanded more labourers therefore by the year 1789, on

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the eve of the French Revolution, the population was divided in the following ratio:

- 32.000 Frenchmen
- 24.000 Freedmen of mixed ancestry
- 50.000 Negro slaves.

As we can imagine the great disparity in number between slaves and landowners was bound to deteriorate for several reasons:

- 1) Cruel treatment towards the slaves.
- 2) Dissatisfaction of the freedmen on being recognized as equal to the white landowners.
- 3) The news of the French Revolution.

Several movements were initiated in Saint Domingue by men who believed that the time for freedom had finally come. The most famous are: Pierre-Dominique Toussaint l'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe.

Pierre-Dominique Toussaint l'Ouverture

Pierre-Dominique Toussaint l'Ouverture was born in Saint Domingue, where he was a slave. He was freed by his master when he was 35. He believed that the ideals of the French Revolution should be applied and extended to the slaves of the island. On August 14,1791 the slaves launched an insurrection. He was named commandant in chief. On February 4, 1794 France was forced to grant the emancipation of the island (the independence for the entire island was however reached on October 1804). Napoleon Became very weary of the situation on the island so he ordered that the most famous of the blacks would be secretly deported to France. Pierre-Dominique Toussaint died there, forgotten and ignored by the man who had been the inspiration for the Revolution (additional information on Toussaint l'Ouverture may be found in my previous unit entitled "Spain and France: Influence in Europe and in the New World - 1990).

Jean-Jacques Dessalines (c. 1748-1806)

Jean-Jacques Dessalines became a general in the French army. While we do not know his original name, we know that he was African and an Ashanti. When he was brought to the island as a slave, he was able to win the trust of his white master and the fellow workers at the Dessalines plantation.

He had the chance of meeting F.D.Toussaint l'Ouverture at an exhibition staged by the authorities during which two mulattos (Oge and Chevannes) were to be broken on the rack because of a new insanity affecting Africans called freedom. Both Africans and mixed blood persons shared the same feelings and the whites felt very uneasy. The two mulattos were put to death and two soldiers paraded the two heads on pikes.

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In 1802 Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe and other mulatto generals, fearful that Bonaparte would restore slavery, stepped the war against the French. Arms and supplies provided by American merchants helped to change the situation. In addition yellow fever decimated the French soldiers and an armistice was signed on November 18, 1803.

Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared the independence of the entire island with the aboriginal name of Haiti in 1804. Dessalines was proclaimed Emperor Jacques I.

The emperor had acquired a reputation for being brave and cruel. For example he had ordered the massacre of the remaining French troops after he had been elected governor general. His idea of reviving agricultural production by reinstating forced labor was not met with favor by his followers.

Jean-Jacques Dessalines, regarded as the chief Hero of the Haitian war for Independence was the one who gave back the original name of Haiti to Espanola or Saint Domingue, The illiterate slave of a free negro, Jean-J. Dessalines was finally killed in an ambush at Port au Prince, Martinique, while he was attempting to suppress a revolt among mulattos in the South.

Henri Christophe (1767-1820)

He was born on the island of St. Kitts. When he was 7 years old he was apprenticed to a mason on his master's estate. He changed masters when he was twelve, when the sailing master of the ship he went on, claimed him as his own. He was at that moment given the name of Christophe. He was sold after a short while to the Coidovic household. He purchased his freedom from slavery and became Toussaint's Lieutenant and General in chief of the army during the seven years uprising. Realising that Toussaint would be deposed by Napoleon in favor of Leclerc, (Napoleon's brother in law, Pauline's husband) he escaped to the mountains.

After the death of Dessalines he became the first President of Haiti in 1807. He was crowned king on June 12, 1812. Under him his country prospered, He built a royal palace that was called the Sans Souci. He was accused of promoting slavery against his own people and of unnecessary cruelty. The people themselves rose up and his own troops abandoned him. He committed suicide and his wife disposed of his body rather than leaving it in the mob's hands. His family left the country safely and went to England. Presently his wife is buried in Pisa, Italy.

LESSON PLAN

Objective To understand the importance of the discovery of a new land by analyzing the background of the enterprise.

Teaching aids: A map of the European Continent and a Map showing the Caribbean Islands of Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe(possibly enlarged).

Procedure The teacher will explain to the students that they will be rediscovering the Island of Haiti. The teacher will give the background of Columbus beliefs about his voyage. He or she will explain that the whole class will participate in the project. It is also important that they understand that everytime the word "freeze" is pronounced the whole class will stop in the position they are sought. The class will be then divided into three sets of actors: Columbus, the sailors and the Indians.

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1. Columbus will read the letter to his Majesties. The sailors and the Indians will position for action.

Freeze—Question: Columbus what are you really thinking? Why did you say that you still have some natives with you? Why are the Indians so willing to give?

- 2. The game will resume and the sailors will approach the natives. Freeze. The teacher will ask to one of the sailors why did he go on the land, why he is approaching the native, what does he think about the individual. These questions do not have to be asked necessarily to the same person but rather it can be asked to different students and the game can be resumed or stopped any time the teacher wants. A variation of it could also be to elect or nominate a captain.
- 3. The third group representing the natives can also elect a chief representing the tribe. The questions can deal with fear, superstition, special of the moment feelings etc.

In the course of my teaching I have noticed many times that we do not give enough credit to the potential of the students. This is one of the occasion when their power of imagination should be promoted.

The landing at Hispaniola

(figure available in print form)

MARTINIQUE Martinique was discovered during Christopher Columbus' fourth trip to the New World. Martinique was conquered by the French on September 15, 1635. Soon the Governor, Belain d'Ensambuc, started to exterminate the Caribe Indians, the original inhabitants of the island. The island was afterwards taken over by people of all ways of life: nobles and protestants exiled after the revocation of the treaty of Nantes. (figure available in print form)

The island of Martinique was originally called Madinina, The Arawakan Indians were the first inhabitants followed by the Carib Indians. Slaves working in a sugar plantation. Martinique was known as a sugar island.

Introduction of slavery in Martinique

In the middle of the 17th century the original structure of the island was completely changed with the culture of sugar cane. The society was split in two powers: the Grands Blancs (Big Whites) and the Petits Blancs (Small whites). The first ones had the protection of the king's Council which allowed them to have all the political and economic power. The second ones called also *Obligés* (obligated) had to follow the orders of the other class and were generally bound by a three year contract from which their name was derived. Under these circumstances the introduction of slaves was welcomed because they would provide all the help the *Obligés* were required to give. As a direct result the use of "Engagement" was abolished by a decree on September 10,1774. (Engagement was the technical word to define specifically the three year contract which bound the workers coming in the island to work as labourers).

According to records approximately 50 million, maybe more, black slaves were transported during the trade with a loss of about 20% during the trip. In 1664 the count was 3.158 slaves against a population of 2.904 whites.

The working day of a slave began at sunrise with little rest, which according to the historian Gaston Martin for

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the period 1752-1776 would cause the death of 1/3 of the slaves. Also, according to a chronical writer of the time, Hillard d'Auberteuil, their lifespan was no more than fifteen years due not to sickness, but rather to the tyranny of their masters.

Apparition of Mixed Blood

Sexual encounters between masters and black slaves were frequent. The offspring of such unions were called mulattos. There were however other definitions to stress the differences between the levels of inhabitants of the island:

Bekes or Z'oreille—a white person coming directly from the metropolitan areas of France.

Créole —Whites born in Martinique or living in Martinique for several generation with direct origin with the mother country.

Blacks—Black people with black complexion and black or brown eyes.

Mestis—Offspring of white and blacks.

At the end of the reign of Louis XV Mulattos were the core of the island as important in number as the whites. They did not however have a strong political and economic power. Among the restrictions:

Mulattos were forbidden to be called Monsieur (gentleman, sir) and Madame (lady).

Mulattos were forbidden to meet even for wedding parties or dances

Mulattos could not take particular seats during ceremonies.

Mulattos could not walk on public walks.

Mulattos could not infiltrate the kingdom no matter for what reason.

Mulattos could not call themselves with a name reserved for whites (Julien 1955, T,I, p. 83).

Even if the children came from the union with a slave and were given lands, they were generally of low worth making them therefore merely little farmers.

On May 15, 1791 it seemed that all colored people born from free parents would obtain that freedom. But they were betrayed when the same decree was overturned on September 24, 1791 by another decree stating that all the rights concerning the political-status of the colored people and of the free blacks would be handled by the several assemblies of the Colonies.

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The colored people had therefore no alternative but to turn to an organization called "The Society of the Friends of the Blacks (La Societe des Amis des Noirs". They joined also the abolition party and the party of the Republic.

Life in Martinique during the 17th century is well described by R.P. Tertre and R.P. Labat.

Slavery was finally abolished in 1848 through the initiatives of the French reformer Victor Shoelcher and all the inhabitants became French citizens. Martinique became a department of France in 1946.

Important political figures of Martinique

Among the figures who played an important role in Martinique we can find Bissette, Victor Shoelcher and Josephine Bonaparte.

Bissette

He was the main figure of "mulatto" politics. He was a free black and a little slave owner. He was exiled in France where he became a strict abolitionist. Back in Martinique in 1849 he campaigned with the rich white creole *Pécoulle*.

Josephine Bonaparte (1763-1814)

Josephine was born in Martinique under her family name of Marie Rose Josephine Tacher. She married the Vicomte de Beauharnais in 1779 and she transferred in Paris. During the French Revolution her husband was guillotined but Josephine escaped the execution. In 1796 she married Napoleon Bonaparte. She became empress of France in 1804 bur five years later the marriage was annulled because the lack of an heir.

LESSON PLAN

Objective To learn about the island of Martinique and its history.

Teaching aids: A map of Europe and a map of the American Continent showing Martinique possibly enlarged.

Procedure The teacher will divide the class in several groups. She or he will explain that they will become Petits Blancs, Grands Blancs, Obliges and slaves.

- 1. the Grands Blancs must discuss the problems of crops, keeping slaves and dealing with engages.
- 2. the Petits Blancs must discuss their problems in dealing with the Grands Blancs, the engages and slaves (if they have any)
- 3. The engages must discuss their problems about the time limit of their staying and their options as well as their own personal problems.
- 4. The slaves must make a List of the reason why they are not satisfied under their present status.

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After the time specified by the teacher expires the students will discuss their problems with all the other groups. The students will try then to issue some rules or modus vivendi to ensure peace. By promoting this kind of discussion the teacher should be able to prove that fairness a decent living cannot be fount in slavery and repression. GUADELOUPE Although considered one bodied the island is really two small ones separated by a river called "la riviere salee" (the salted river)

Name of the original Indians Caribs who called the island Karukera, island of beautiful waters.

The two sections are called "La Grande Terre" (the big land) and "La Basse Terre" (the low land)

After the achievement of freedom from slavery due to a lack of manpower in the sugar plantation the island acquired labourers from East India.

(figure available in print form)

Columbus landed on the island in 1493 in the location called now Pointe ^ P"tre in the Basse Terre (Low Land). He renamed the island Guadeloupe in honor of the Virgin of Extremadura in Spain. The Spanish name was replaced by the French in 1635.

French Colonization

Undertaken with the support of Cardinal Richelieu who entrusted the "Compagnie des Iles d'Amerugue" with the enterprise, the first coloners were independent settlers or engages (under contract) also called "trente six mois" (thirty six months) due to the duration of the obligatority of their contract.

The settlement was a difficult and a tragic one. The natives, the Caribs, opposed the take over of their land and were therefore brutally exterminated. Because manpower was essential to the prosperity of the island and the new owners the continuous flowing of it was ensured with the introduction of slavery which had been already flourishing since the 15th century by the work of Portugal who provided the western countries established in the new continent with the much needed manpower.

By 1685 the disproportion between the black labourers and the white landowners was so great the in order to smooth out the relations between the masters and the workers and to avoid further troubles Louis XIV published on April 23,1615 what it would be known as the "Code Noir" (Black Code).

The Code consists of sixty article. Here are a few examples of them: The landlord must baptise and educate the slave in the Roman Catholic and Apostolic religion. The slave will not work on Sundays an Holidays The slave will be allowed to marry and the family will not be sold unless as a whole. The offspring of a slave and a free person will follow his/ her mother destiny.

The Code alone was not enough to balance an already deteriorating situation and from 1656 several rebellions took place which in turn culminated with the executions of three black slaves, Pedre, Leblanc and Latulipe.

Important political figures of Guadeloupe

Coquille Dugommier (1738-1794?)

Coquille Dugommier participated actively into the freedom movement. His role was so important that the Colonial Assembly arrested him with other eleven patriots and deported the. Freed in France, he became friend with Marat and was nominated Chief General during the take over of Tolon. He went afterwards to fight

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in the campaigns in the Pyreneys where he died. After his death the Convention decided that his name would be inscribed on the column dedicated in memory of the Protectors of the Country.

Victor Hugues (- 1826)

Victor Hugues was born in Marseille, France, at first he established himself in Haiti but then he returned to France after his house and properties were burnt during the unrest on the island. He was given the post to Guadeloupe together with Pierre Chretien.

He ensured the abolition of slavery but his character was considered very uncommon by his contemporaries who considered him to be a tier and very ambitious, sometimes loyal but with a marked love for gold. He was also regarded as very capable under crisis situations and while the natives of Guadeloupe accused him of brutality the English praised his cleverness.

The English had attempted on several occasion the conquest of the island. In 1691 they assaulted the fort Saint Charles in the Basse Terre (Low Land) under the command of General Codrington but they were pushed back. Other attempts took place in 1703 and in 1759. The island capitulated on May 1,1759.

On September 1794 the French under the orders of Victor Hugues took over again the island however the his regime was very similar to the post revolution regime of terror in France and immediately after he regained the island he went to work with the Guillotine he had just brought from France.

Victor Hugues died on August 11,1826 in Guyane after being removed from his post for his barbaric behavior towards the citizens of Martinique.

Louis Delgres (1766- 1802)

Louis Delgres was born in Saint Pierre, Martinique, he became lieutenant and served in Martinique against the English. He was taken prisoner and deported to England. He is made Chief of Battalion the 9 Vendemiaire, year 9 (October 1, 1800) and left for Guadeloupe with the task of replacing the Provisory Council and fill all the posts by appointing especially blacks devoted to the cause of freedom and who could be trusted.

On May 6,1801 Delgres realized that a coup was being prepared against him to reinstate slavery. Delgres made very clear that he would die rather than become a slave again. The coup took place from May 11 to May 26 and, rather than falling into enemy hands, he killed himself.

From 1802 to 1803 the new regime was established. All the black fighters were exterminated as well the class of the Men of Color and the Blacks. More than 12.000 blacks and men of colors were killed or deported. Everyone who had served under the army or participated in any way to the fights for freedom, men and women, was looked for and punished unmercifully.

During the proclamation written by Delgres on the eve of his death he had stated that "The resistance to oppression is a natural right. Even God cannot be insulted by the desire to defend our cause because he is Justice and Humanity".

Slavery was finally abolished in 1848.

LESSON PLAN

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Objectives Getting familiar with the history of Guadeloupe.

Materials needed A map of Europe and a Map of the American Continent. The teacher should always stress the original name of the natives as well as the original name of the location. Papers and pens are also needed for the following exercise.

Procedure The teacher will give the following choice of exercise: Portrait of an Heroe. Portrait of a tyrant. The student will include the qualities of the person of his/her choice. After the time given by the teacher has elapsed the teacher will select a monitor. The monitor will write on the board the words Ruler and Hero. All the different choices will be reported on the board. After the due process has been finished the teacher will start the discussion of the different items.

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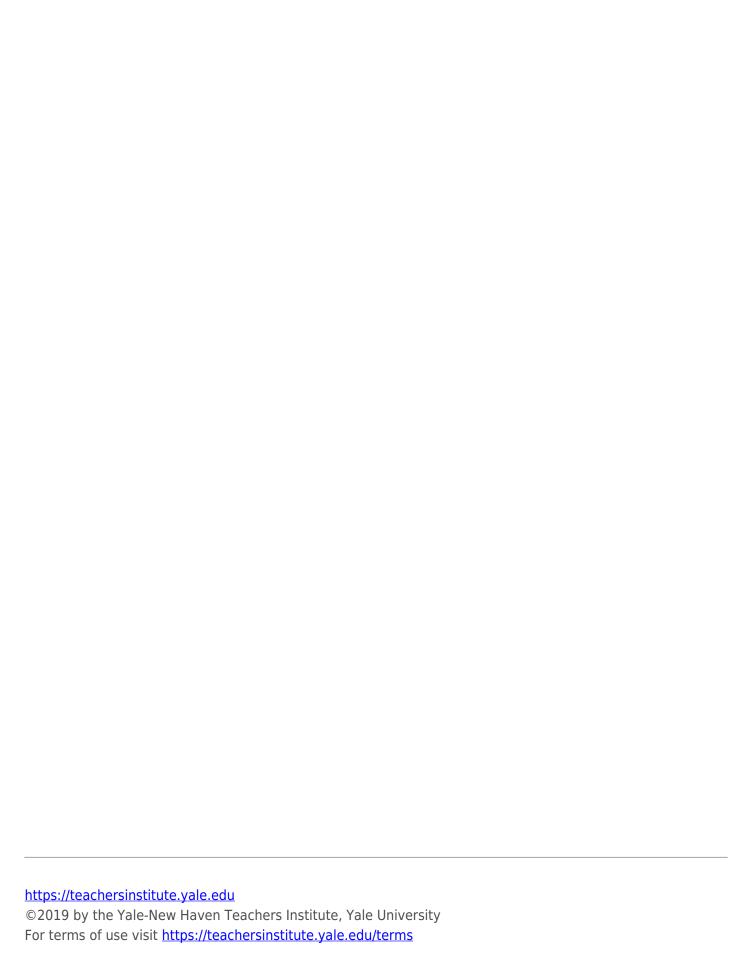
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