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Teaching American History
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UNIT PLAN: Slavery, Sectionalism, and Change. The “Promise” of America Fulfilled Through the Life of Frederick Douglass.

BACKGROUND:

After having been exposed in greater depth than before to the significance of Frederick Douglass as a result of the TAH seminar, I have decided to make him a much more central figure in my teaching of the antebellum period, Civil War, and Reconstruction Era. Through three mini-units/ long-term activities, students in my 10th grade USI classes will analyze the following broad thematic topics: (1) The depravity of slavery in Antebellum America and (2) The “Revolutionary” rise of the “self-made” man principle in the United States, and the embodiment of that principle by Frederick Douglass as an agent for social and political change for himself and future generations. In addition, students will summarize the chronological events leading to the growth of sectional conflict and Civil War through the parallel lenses of the time-line of the life of Frederick Douglass. Ultimately, in addition to gaining more depth of understanding and perspective of the time period and struggles facing the nation before, during, and after the Civil War, students will hopefully be inspired by the story of the fight for freedom and the shining example of courage and dedication to the quest for liberty that is represented by the life of Frederick Douglass. The story of a slave, overcoming the institutionalized and legally accepted condition of slavery, rising to international fame as a writer and speaker, publisher, pre-eminent recruiter for the 54th regiment, advisor to President Lincoln during the Civil War, post-war Presidential appointee to various Reconstruction initiatives and as US Marshal for the District of Columbia and minister to a Haiti, and advocate for other social reform movements including women’s rights, is as inspiring as any in American history and truly represents the “promise” of America being fulfilled over time.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- (1) Describe the revolutionary significance of the Enlightenment principle of “meritocracy” and the “self-made” person to American society and its evolution from the Revolutionary era to the late 19th century.
- (2) Compare and contrast the lives of “self-made” men in early American history.
- (3) Understand the depths of human suffering and the obstacles to overcoming the condition of systematic slavery in America.
- (4) Summarize the critical events leading to sectional division and civil war in America and the impact and influence of Frederick Douglass in the eradication of slavery.
- (5) Analyze the significance of education and the power of the individual to overcome socio-economic obstacles and account for social and political change in America.
- (6) Explain why slavery was accepted in America for so long.

OVERARCHING THEME/ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How can one person, overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, change not only his or her life, but the course of history and the lives of others?

SKILLS:

- Interpret and construct timelines that show how events and eras in various parts of the world are related to one another.
- Read and analyze primary sources (including the slave narrative) and secondary sources.
- Conduct research and organize a thesis paper.
- Develop perspective of the time period.

STATE STANDARDS:

USI.29 Describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800 and analyze slave life and resistance on plantations and farms across the South, as well as the impact of the cotton gin on the economics of slavery and Southern agriculture.

USI.31 Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism. (Emphasis on Frederick Douglass)

USI.36 Summarize the critical developments leading to the Civil War.

USI.41 Explain the policies and consequences of Reconstruction.

PROCEDURE:**ACTIVITY ONE****PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: THE NARRATIVE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS.**

Throughout the US I course, students are given the opportunity to analyze in somewhat chronological fashion, the theme of rising sectionalism centered on slavery. Slavery and sectionalism concepts taught include:

- the evolution of slavery in the colonies.
- the “complicity” of the North as both slave holders and ancillary beneficiaries of slavery in the South (slave traders, suppliers of food and goods to the Southern planters, and primary purchasers of Southern cotton for factory production of textiles).
- the debates (political and economic) and compromises over the issue of slavery during the 2nd Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention.
- the shift from a “dying” system to one of entrenchment and spread with the introduction of the cotton gin.
- the rise of abolitionism during the antebellum period.
- the shift from a political/economic conflict over slavery to ultimately a moral human-rights debate.

Students may however be left with the following question: How was slavery able to exist in America for so long before being challenged? Why was it accepted? In addition, although

they can comprehend the injustice of slavery, and glean an understanding of its depravity from images and recreations in film, students do not connect with the actual horror and brutality of slavery from a first-hand account through which they can connect with emotionally.

After the course reaches the point of the introduction of cotton and the cotton gin in the South, students will be assigned Frederick Douglass' Narrative and be challenged to understand the depths of oppression and suffering that slaves faced.

Depending on the structure/level of the class, students will be assigned specific Chapters of the Narrative and be asked to engage in the following activities and produce certain assessment products. All of the activities and assessments will be linked to the following key questions.

- (1) What did slaveholders use as "tools of oppression" of the enslaved?
- (2) What obstacles did slaves face to achieve a change in their human condition?
- (3) What was the existence of slavery like?
- (4) What allowed Frederick Douglass to ultimately realize that his condition was not as nature intended?
- (5) Why did people who knew slavery was morally wrong support it?
- (6) How do the "obstacles" you face in your life compare to those of Frederick Douglass?
- (7) If courage is the resistance of and mastery of fear, how does Frederick Douglass embody it?

THE NARRATIVE: Analysis of the Slave Narrative as a literary form and primary source.

Students will be assigned specific chapters (or selected excerpts from the chapters) from the Narrative to read and assess the meaning in the following broad categories, using a chart, graphic organizer, or other method of recording their reading reflections. If copies of the Narrative are not available, Edsitement has a specific link to the Narrative on-line to the American Memory Project (<http://memory.loc.gov>). The parentheticals are my thoughts of some of the reflections/reactions that students will hopefully have within each category. Reflections will cross over within categories and will vary.

- **Southern tools of oppression** (deprivation of familial relations; brutality, beatings, whippings, the use of "holidays" and drinking as a method of submission, deprivation of education-Auld's statement/warning against teaching a slave to read)
- **Horrific brutality of the slave master** (Chapter 1 [Aunt Hester] Chapter IV [execution of Demby by overseer Gore; Beating of Mrs. Hick's slave; execution of Colonel Lloyd's elderly slave for "trespassing"; Chapter 9 – hunger and the beating of "Henny"; Chapter 10 Douglass' whipping by Covey; the "breeding" of slaves by Covey and Mr. Harrison and the slave Caroline]
- **Life of injustice** [Chapter 8 and the estate sale; Chapter 10 punishment by Covey for the "ox" incident and the constant state of fear, throughout the narrative-deprivation of food, dignity)
- **Deprivation of education** [Chapter VI Mrs. Auld's transformation from non-slaveholder to slaveholder; Mr. Auld's expression of the slaveholder's reason for withholding education to slaves
- **Education as "liberator"** [Various excerpts throughout; Douglass' despair upon becoming 'aware' of his condition as a slave; use of literacy to battle against his

- condition; efforts to avoid detection while self-teaching literacy; awareness of abolitionist arguments; running his “Sunday school” reading teaching other slaves to read and its impact “to imbue their minds with thoughts of freedom”; Impact of the Narrative on Antebellum society.]
- **“Slaveholder Religion”/The hypocrisy of slaveholding “Christians”** (Chapter 9 – Auld’s “conversion” leads to his finding sanction for slaveholding and cruelty in scripture. Chapters 9 & 10-Covey the professor of religion and “slave breaker”; other excerpts of Chapter 10 signifying his quote on page 46 “I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me”.)
 - **Fighting for Freedom/Courage** [Chapter 10- specifically pp. 38 – 39 as the starting point wherein Douglass acknowledges being “broken” and “was made a slave....but now “how a slave was made a man”; and the ensuing beating by Covey, and subsequent standing up to Covey and beating of him by Douglass- the battle with Covey “rekindled” Douglass’ “embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood”.; Chapter 11 and his ultimate escape to freedom)

In addition to teacher-created prompts, graphic organizers and reading assignments, Edsitement has several lesson plans with links to various resources and interactive student guides to help access the Narrative and differentiate instruction.

OPEN-RESPONSE PROMPT(S): Following their analysis of the Narrative, students will develop a thesis and write an essay in response to the following prompts.

(1) Using the “APPARTS” method for analyzing a primary source, (Author, Place & Time, Prior Knowledge, Audience, Reason, Main Idea, Significance of source), why was Frederick Douglass’ Narrative more than a “story” but a major force of social and political change?

(2) “To those who have suffered in slavery I can say I too have suffered in slavery. For those who have battled for liberty, brotherhood, and citizenship, I too, have battled.” – Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* 1881.

(A) Using the Narrative of Frederick Douglass, describe how Douglass fought his battle and in addition to his own freedom, what else did he achieve?

(B) If slavery represents “life obstacles”, what comparisons can you make to your life and that of Frederick Douglass?

(3) “I have found that to make a contented slave, it is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right, and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man.” – Frederick Douglass; *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. (A) Explain how this passage describes, from Douglass’ perspective, the condition of the slave. (B) Describe how Douglass refused to “cease to be a man.”

ACTIVITY TWO:

FULFILLMENT OF THE REVOLUTION: THE SELF-MADE MAN PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO THE LIVES OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, HIS REVOLUTIONARY COUNTERPARTS AND THE STUDENT.

One of the most fascinating concepts in studying the evolution of America is the principle of social-mobility or elements of “meritocracy” as a by-product of the American Revolution. One of the most significant breaks from the “Old World” in the American Revolution was the ability of a man of “average birth”, to achieve affluence and power in the “New World” through his own initiative. Ultimately one of the most significant “liberators” of the individual and society from both “Old World” (i.e., serfdom) and “New World” (i.e. slavery) bondage was the concept of self-improvement through effort and education. As Stauffer points out in his Preface to *Giants*, Douglass’ “Self-Made Men” speech had as its central tenant the concept of improvement of self through education and hard work. Furthermore the ultimate goal of the “self-made man” was to improve society through the improvement of the self.

By way of accessing prior knowledge concerning the “Old World” (Medieval Europe, Age of Absolutism etc.) students in pairs or collaborative groups will brainstorm what they recall about the status of “social mobility” and “individual power” in the “Old World”. Additionally students will be asked to recall from their prior studies the historical shifts in the concepts of the potential of the individual (i.e. the Reformation, Renaissance, Second Great Awakening) This will be followed by a whole class debrief and a power-point on the feudal pyramid, “divine right” of monarchs and Hobbs’ “Leviathan” model, and the transition to and development of Enlightenment philosophies (Locke et. Al.).

Additional sources of background information and analysis of the concept of American change would be the Introduction (or specific segments of it) in Darren Staloff’s “Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson- The Politics of the American Enlightenment and The American Founding” and sections of “Giants” by John Stauffer.

Students will then analyze Douglass’ “Self-Made Men” speech using the APPARTS method.

Finally, in order to provide them with the opportunity to analyze the evolution of the concept of “meritocracy” or the “self-made man” principle, students will conduct research on and compare and contrast the lives of representatives of this principle in America, one of which MUST include Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. The third representative model can be selected from John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, or Alexander Hamilton. If time is available, all 5 can serve for the comparison.

As students conduct research on the lives of these “self-made men”, they will be guided in collecting information with charts highlighting the following categories:

- Education
- Birth/Family
- Socio-economic obstacles
- Efforts to attain self-improvement
- Mentors/helpers

- Personal achievements
- Societal contributions

Students will then individually or collaboratively compare and contrast (Venn Diagram) the lives of these individuals from the context of the empowered individual or “self-made” person.

The guiding questions to assess:

- What obstacles did this person overcome to become “important”?
- How did they overcome these obstacles?
- Did they improve society through improving themselves?
- How did the concept of “meritocracy” or “equality” change between 1776 and the 20th century.
- How does this principle of “self-made” apply to you?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Students will access subscription databases available to them in school and from home via the IMC (i.e., Gale, ABC-CLIO) and conduct background research on the evolution of the ideal of the individual, “meritocracy” and the “self-made man”. They will also access biographical summaries. Some suggested readings include:

"Ideology of Freedom: Need To Know." *American Government*. ABC-CLIO, 2011. Web. 21 Sept. 2011.

Singman, Jeffrey L. "Feudalism in Asia and Europe: Need To Know." *World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras*. ABC-CLIO, 2011.

Frederick Douglass." *Notable Black American Men, Book II*. Ed. Jessie Carney Smith. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011. Document URL
http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=GALE%7C00000000MQ6B&documentId=GALE%7CK1622000126&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=f184d349a2f9002436e9306efd57ec03

Hagler, D. Harland. "Frederick Douglass." *Great Lives from History: The Nineteenth Century*. Ed. John Powell. 4 vols. Salem Press, 2007. *Salem History* Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Fellman, Michael. "Three views of the Lincoln-Douglass dynamic." *Civil War Times* 48.4 (2009): 59+. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Journals&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CA201548542&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=82902f28079f2b532855a4a04bdceec6

(An insightful analysis of the historical treatment of the Lincoln-Douglass relationship outlined by three historians, including John Stauffer).

Carlson, Peter. "Abraham Lincoln meets Frederick Douglass." *American History* 45.6 (2011): 28+. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Journals&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CA243714205&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=645bd3795853552a759a0c3f4d290666

"Abraham Lincoln." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=GALE%7C00000000MPRT&documentId=GALE%7CK1631003963&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=c5b2f7923cf990a49c388bdeb3dcc738

"John Adams." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=GALE%7C00000000MQAB&documentId=GALE%7CK1631000048&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=1ec8055f9241b78a252c69f3067f9037

Becker, Robert A. "John Adams." *Great Lives from History: The Eighteenth Century*. Ed. John Powell. 2 vols. Salem Press, 2006. *Salem History* Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

"Alexander Hamilton." *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*. Ed. Thomas Carson and Mary Bonk. Detroit: Gale, 1999. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=GALE%7C00000000MRKT&documentId=GALE%7CK1667000078&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=c00a29a974d6db79d481993e4b980ad8

Finkelman, Paul. "Alexander Hamilton." *Great Lives from History: The Eighteenth Century*. Ed. John Powell. 2 vols. Salem Press, 2006. *Salem History* Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

"Benjamin Franklin." *Business Leader Profiles for Students*. Ed. Sheila Dow and Jaime E. Noce. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1999. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

Document URL

http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&disableHighlighting=true&prodId=BIC1&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=GALE%7C00000000MPVB&documentId=GALE%7CK1604000078&mode=view&userGroupName=mlyn_n_salemhs&jsid=8a142f5c3fc43936753416cff3d13ed4

Johnson, Edward. "Benjamin Franklin." *Great Lives from History: Inventors & Inventions*. Ed. Robert F. Gorman. 4 vols. Salem Press, 2008. *Salem History* Web. 21 Sep. 2011.

ACTIVITY THREE:

INDIVIDUALS OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND CHANGING HISTORY: A PARELLEL TIMELINE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE OF AMERICA.

Frederick Douglass' life represents a lightning rod of change and the fulfillment of the promise that is the American Revolution. Students, after having encountered the Narrative of Douglass, and the chronological study of the events of sectional division from the Missouri Compromise to the Civil War and Reconstruction, will trace key events in the life of Frederick Douglass with the events that would lead the United States into the Civil War and Reconstruction. Using textbook vocabulary and reading comprehension activities, and their prior exposure to the condition of 19th century slaves in America, students will trace the events leading to the Civil War in a parallel timeline of the life of Frederick Douglass and analyze the efforts of abolitionists through the lens of Douglass to eradicate slavery in America and attempt thereafter to achieve true equality and citizenship. Students in collaborative groups will first identify and describe events from the Missouri Compromise to Plessy v. Ferguson. Thereafter they will research specific significant events in the life of Douglass from his birth to death in 1895.

Prior to commencing the review activity, an excellent refresher and also acquisition of deeper understanding on the subject of slavery in antebellum America would be to have students **read pp. 50 – 61 of “What Hath God Wrought” by Daniel Walker Howe** which gives a rich and clear overview of the status and societal “attitudes” toward slavery on the dawn of the Missouri Compromise.

Students will conduct research on the following events and be asked to make connections between the parallel events in the life of Frederick Douglass and the events leading to the Civil War and the ensuing struggle for equality and civil rights. The events are intentionally broad and students will be asked to provide detail on these and other related events in answering the following essential questions for the timeline project:

- ***How did the event represent the growing conflict over the issue of the expansion of slavery?***
- ***What was the significance of the event in Douglass' life in his pursuit of both personal freedom and freedom of others?***

Additional events subsequent to Douglass' death (Brown v Board & the 1964 Civil Rights Act) will encourage students to prepare for their USII course the following year and think about the continued struggle for the better part of an additional century to achieve true legal equality for African Americans.

The following is a FRAMEWORK for ensuring students have selected key events in the growth of sectionalism and Douglass's life in relation to the project's 2 guiding questions. For differentiation: (1) For lower-level learners..use this framework as a manipulative, cutting out the events without the dates and challenging students to first put them in chronological order and then conduct research and present the significance. (2) For middle to higher level learners, challenge them to identify the events first on their own with a specific range of dates (1815 – 1895).

1819-1820: Tallmadge Amendment & The Missouri Compromise	1818- 1826: Frederick Douglass born. Plantation life Maryland.
1829: Walker's Appeal published	1826- Sent to Baltimore (Aulds)
1832: The Nullification Crisis	1827 – 1836 (Baltimore, Reading, Shipyard; Confrontation with Covey; Failed escape attempt;)
1843: Personal Liberty Laws enacted in 8 states including Massachusetts	1838- Escape to freedom - Marriage 1841- 1 st Speech New Bedford MA Meets William Lloyd Garrison
1846-1849: War with Mexico, Wilmot Proviso	1845- Publishes "The Narrative"; Freedom purchased; England/Ireland tour
1850: The Compromise of 1850	1847- Starts the "North Star" 1848- participates in "Seneca Falls"; assists with "underground railroad"
1852: Uncle Tom's Cabin published 1853: Kansas-Nebraska Act	1851- Collaboration with Gerrit Smith - Shift from Constitution as pro-slavery to anti-slavery position - Shift/break from "Garrisonians" 1852- Independence Day Speech
1855: "Bleeding Kansas"	1855- Second Autobiography published
1856: Dred Scott Decision	1859- Flees to Canada –Implicated in Harper's Ferry plot
1858: Lincoln-Douglas Debates	1859- Publication of The Douglass Papers
1859: Harpers Ferry	1863- Becomes recruiter 54 th regiment -Meets Lincoln
1860: Lincoln elected president; Southern Cessation	1864 – 2 nd meeting with Lincoln
1861: Civil War	1865- Begins lecturing (civil rights)
1863: Emancipation Proclamation	1871- Appointed to commission on annexing Dominican Republic
1865: 13 th Amendment, End of Civil War, Assassination of Lincoln	1872- VP nominee of the "Equal Rights Party"
1866: 14 th Amendment	1874- President of Freedman's Savings & Trust Co.
1867: Reconstruction Act	1877- Appointed U S Marshal for D.C.
1869: 15 th Amendment	1878- Purchases Cedar Hill Estate
1870's: Jim Crow Laws	1881- Publishes last autobiography - Appointed registrar of deeds D.C.
1896: Plessy v. Ferguson	1884- 2 nd marriage (interracial)
1954: Brown v. Board of Education	1895- Death
1964: Civil Rights Act	

Students may be given the opportunity to develop their parallel time lines individually or collaboratively.

The format of the presentation can be developed in a variety of ways and students can be encouraged to develop their format according to their skills and interests and to ensure a diversity of presentation styles to the class (standard butcher paper, multi-media (PowerPoint, etc.) or a "role play" format (I-movie "documentary"; character development/interview).

RESOURCES:

Giants, John Stauffer, Twelve Hachette Book Group, 2008.

Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, Darren Staloff, Hill and Wang 2005

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass (Dover Thrift Editions 1995).

What Hath God Wrought, Daniel Walker Howe, Oxford Press 2007)

From Courage to Freedom: Frederick Douglass's 1845 Autobiography (Edsitement.neh.gov lesson plan)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/doughome.html>

<http://www.meader.org/articles/Meritocracy.htm>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/dougFolder5.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-Made_Men_\(Frederick_Douglass\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-Made_Men_(Frederick_Douglass))

<http://www.monadnock.net/douglass/self-made-men.html>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/timeline.html>

<http://www.nsm.buffalo.edu/~sww/0history/hwny-douglass-family.html>

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/exhibits/douglass_exhibit/index.html

http://www.easternshore.com/esguide/douglass_timeline.html

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/curriculum-planning/teaching-methods/3732.html>

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/douglass/>