

## The Constitution and the Convention

### TITLE: Slavery, Civil War, and our Celebrated Certificates

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Grades 9-10

#### MASSACHUSETTS FRAMEWORKS

- USI.3 Explain the influence and ideas of the Declaration of Independence and the political philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. (H, C)  
*Primary Documents to Read:* the Declaration of Independence (1776)
- USI.7 Explain the roles of various founders at the Constitutional Convention. Describe the major debates that occurred at the Convention and the “Great Compromise” that was reached. (H, C)  
*Major Debates*
  - A. the distribution of political power
  - B. the rights of individuals
  - C. the rights of states
  - D. slavery*Primary Documents to Read:* the U.S. Constitution
- USI.19 Explain the rights and the responsibilities of citizenship and describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process through elections, political parties, and interest groups. (H, C)
- USI.31 Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism. (H)  
Frederick Douglass  
William Lloyd Garrison
- USI.38 Analyze Abraham Lincoln’s presidency, the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), his views on slavery, and the political obstacles he encountered. (H, C)

#### ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the abolitionist/former slave Frederick Douglass
- Students will compare and contrast the United States founding documents with similar Confederate documents
- Students will develop arguments regarding the Constitution and its role helping or ending slavery in the United State of America

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Did both Abolitionists and Secessionist act in accordance to the United States ideology?

## PROCEDURE

### Assigned Reading:

Have students read the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

- Have students answer 2-3 questions per chapter (to confirm students have read material )
- Have students write a question regarding the events of each chapter. Utilize class time to discuss and answer questions

*This should introduce students to some of the horrors of slavery, but also to the Southern mentality and defense of slavery (please include a mention of bias in this discussion)*

### Day 1

**Preparation:** Display a Confederate Flag somewhere in the room

**Students to respond in writing:** Explain why this is a racist symbol? *(to be discussed another day, but this should put the students in a “slavery” state of mind)*

Have students review the Declaration of Independence

Answer the following questions:

1. Who does “he” refer to?
2. Who was the audience for this declaration?
3. Why was it written?
4. How did the audience respond to this declaration?

Class discussion to unite class on the intentions of Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence

Use remaining time discussing Frederick Douglass (exploring, sharing, answering student questions about the Narrative and slavery – see assigned reading tasks above).

## **Day 2** (could be assigned as Homework)

**Preparation:** Once again, display the Confederate Flag; prepare copies of the Declaration of Secession of South Carolina for each student

**Students to respond in writing:** How is the Confederate Flag similar to the United States Flag? How is it different? (*Similar to the question is the SC secession different than the Dec. of Independence? Which is today's topic*)

Class discussion on the Confederate Flag and its role in America today, and during the Civil War

Students to read South Carolina's secession document and answer the following questions;

1. Who was the audience for this declaration?
2. Why was it written?
3. What do you think was the response to this declaration?
4. What United States documents does South Carolina use to defend these actions? Why?

Have students gather in groups of 3 to 4, Groups should list their top three reasons South Carolina provides for secession, as well as the weakest argument in the document. Each group should assign a speaker who will share and discuss with the class.

HW: A review assignment on the major principles of the Constitution

## **Day 3**

**Preparation:** Copies of James Oakes article (opening 2 paragraphs); Abraham Lincoln Letter to Joshua Speed Springfield, Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, 1855

Begin day with Lincoln Letter to Joshua Speed (along with questions)

1. What does Lincoln think about slavery? Which passage in the reading makes you believe this?
2. Is Lincoln advocating the end of slavery in the United States? Why or why not?

*(Follow-up discussion the instructor should include Lincoln's Constitutional belief overrides his desire to end slavery, but does not override his beliefs to extend slavery)*

Short class discussion of the major principles of the Constitution (to clarify prior nights assignment)

Students to respond in writing: Does the 3/5ths Clause reward or punish the South? Explain your answer.

Students should read James Oakes article (read first two paragraphs as a class, discuss the three views).

HW: Rest of article should be read as HW

## Day 4

**Preparation:** Have Handout 5 from Rodriguez lesson plan ready to pass out to each student; Students should have access to copies of the Constitution; List the following on the board:

1. Preamble
2. Article I, Section 8
3. Article IV, Section 2
4. Article I, Section 9

Students should pair share answers to yesterday's prompt (3/5ths Clause)

Pass out Handout 5 (from Rodriguez lesson) and discuss, as a class, both the Anti- and Pro-Slavery arguments (*Going through one together may make the other portions of the Constitution easier to determine the two sides*)

Each pair should be given one section of the Constitution and assigned either the Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery standpoint. They should work to list as many arguments as possible defending that standpoint. (*The Rodriguez lesson provides the arguments in other handouts which I have included for convenience, however I would avoid handing them out to students unless it is clearly needed*)

Combine pairs with opposite stances, but the same section of the Constitution to share their results. Then have both arguments written on a white board or large sheet of paper to be shared with entire class.

**HW Final Question: In a five paragraph essay answer the following:**

Did both Abolitionists and Secessionist act in accordance to the United States ideology? Please explain your answer using specific examples from the historical documents provided or other outside research.

**Continued lesson:** I feel this lesson can be added to at a later date as it covers a wide range of issues such as Constitution, Slavery, and state sovereignty. A class debate or a project could be an interesting way to revisit the topic at a later date. Current events such as Arizona immigration policy, health care, tax rates, and any type of governmental assistance could be argued as constitutional or unconstitutional.

## **Required Readings**

**Basler, Roy P. "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln" 2:320 New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1953**

**Douglass, Frederick "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" Oxford University Press 1996**

**Memminger, Charles G. "Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union" pgs 41-44, OAH Magazine of History April 2011**

**Oakes, James "Frederick Douglass Changed My Mind about the Constitution" pgs 251-252, National Council for the Social Studies 2008**

**Rodriguez, Vanessa "Frederick Douglass, the Constitution, and Slavery: A Classroom Debate" pgs M2-M13 National Council for the Social Studies September 2008**

# **Slavery, Civil War, and our Celebrated Certificates**

**Final Project 2011**

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