

Common Core Lesson Plan

Topic: The Southern Commitment to Slavery

Title: *Slavery – Economics vs. Morality*

The purpose of this lesson is to get students thinking about why some people in history made decisions that are widely or wholly looked down upon today. In this case, we want students to understand what drove Southerners to fuel the growth of slavery in a way where they were able to dismiss the negative impacts their actions had on the slaves themselves. This could be taught in the early years of the Nation, somewhere in the 1790-1830 range.

Resources (primary resource documents, artifacts, material needs, etc.)

- Kingsley Plantation Sketch
- Slavery Resources Sheet
- Moralists/Profiteers/Judges Record Sheets

Common Core Standards

- RH 1, 2, 4-9

Essential Standards

- 8.H.1.3, 8.H.1.5, 8.E.1.1

Background Information

- Students will have studied both Europe and Africa independently, and seen the slave trade on a global scale from both the 6th and 7th Social Studies curricula. Additionally, students will have learned about the foundations of American society at this point, up to and including the Revolutionary period.

Instructional Sequence (before, during, and after instruction)

Step 1

Ask students the following question as a drill or warm-up: “Why do some people change their behaviors so drastically when money is involved? Why does money have such a strong influence on people?” Use responses from this question to point out that the power of money and its influence have done this to people throughout time.

Step 2

Introduce the concept of plantation ownership with the image found at:

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/slavery/kingsley-plantation-sketch.jpg>. Have students point out the details they notice – the size and location of the plantation house, the number and variety of crops grown, and the size and location of the slave quarters.

Step 3

Split students into two groups. The first group (who will represent people opposed to slave ownership and plantation life) should be one half of the class, the second group (who will represent an early 18th Century plantation owner) one quarter, and the third group the remaining quarter.

Step 4

Hand out the Slavery Resources Sheet. The first group will try and convince the second group that it is wrong to place profits over people. They will use the resources to build arguments as to why the plantation owners are wrong to do what they do. The second group, the plantation owners, will use the resources to build the case that the money made far outweighed the negatives to the individual slaves. The third group, acting as judge, will look through the resources so that they can begin to form an opinion about whom they believe to be right. They will also focus on finding specific data (costs, incomes, etc.) that highlight the true cost of running a plantation at this time. Each group will track their findings on specific record sheets designed for them. These sheets will serve as formative assessments for each student.

Step 5

After the research has been completed, the moralists will present arguments against the plantation owners. The plantation owners will then respond with their own arguments. This can be done in a variety of debate formats – either with representatives from each group or as a whole class; through a point/counterpoint or each side all at once; in a timed session or an un-timed session. At the end, the judges will first vote as a group to which side presented itself better, and then share with the class the data it found about the cost of plantation ownership.