

Eighth Grade Lesson Plan

Texas African American Women Before and After the Civil War

Introduction: African American women emigrated to Texas as slaves, settling mostly in east and central Texas. A few won their freedom before the Civil War, but most helped provide slave labor that enabled early Texans to develop the state's agricultural system. After winning their freedom, they worked to reunite their families and educate African Americans and assert their rights as workers and citizens.

Objective: This two-day lesson plan introduces students to the work and status of African American women before the Civil War and the changes and challenges they faced after freedom was granted in 1865. At the end of the lesson, students will have gained an understanding of the hardships of African American women confronted, their value to the development of the agricultural economy, and their accomplishments of African American women during Reconstruction in education, religion, politics, and family life.

TEKS:

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(7) History. The student understands how political, economic, and social factors led to the growth of sectionalism and the Civil War. The student is expected to:

(B) compare the effects of political, economic, and social factors on slaves and free blacks.

(9) History. The student understands the effects of Reconstruction on the political, economic, and social life of the nation. The student is expected to:

(C) explain the economic, political, and social problems during Reconstruction and evaluate their impact on different groups.

(17) Government. The student understands the process of changing the U.S. Constitution and the impact of amendments on American society. The student is expected to:

(B) describe the impact of 19th-century amendments, including the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, on life in the United States.

(23) Culture. The student understands the relationships between and among people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, during the 17th, 18th, and 18th centuries. The student is expected to:

(A) identify selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups that settled in the United States and their reasons for immigration;

(E) identify the political, social, and economic contributions of women to American society.

(29) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

(C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;

(E) support a point of view on a social studies issue or event.

Day One: African American Women Before the Civil War

Procedures

The teacher:

1. Shares information about African American women in Texas before the Civil War, both slave and free. (See next page.) Discusses with the students the types of work slave and free women did, their status, and the areas of Texas where most slaves lived.
2. Distributes the copy of the “Slave and Free Women Compare & Contrast Table” for students to complete as a group.
3. Distributes “Sylvia King’s Long Journey” activity sheet and world outline map.
http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/world_country.pdf for students to complete individually.
4. Distributes student copy of “Where did Slave Women Live?” sheet and Texas county outline map.
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/texas.jpg> for students to complete.
5. Distributes “Mary Madison’s Petition to Stay in Texas.” Students form small groups to discuss and answer questions. Students give oral presentations on groups’ answers.

Extension Activities:

1. Students take home “Solve a Problem from the Days of Slavery” and write a report based on their answers. OR
2. Students visit Library of Congress website on the Slave Narratives.
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>. Search photographs by state to select a former slave from your area of Texas. Go back to Slave Narrative home page and search for that person’s story by his or her name. Give a report on that slave’s story.

Student Handouts:

- “Slave and Free Women Compare & Contrast Table”
- Activity sheet “Sylvia King’s Long Journey”
- World outline map
- Activity sheet “Where did Slave Women Live?”
- Texas county outline map <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/texas.jpg>
- Group discussion sheet “Mary Madison’s Petition to Stay in Texas”
- Group discussion questions “The Case of Mary Madison: What Would You Do”
- Extension Activity Problem Solving worksheet “Solve a Problem from the Days of Slavery”
- Extension Activity instruction sheet “Exploring Stories of Texas Slaves”

African American Women in Texas Before the Civil War

(Sources: *Handbook of Texas Online* and
Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph*)

Most African American women in Texas before the Civil War were enslaved. Slave women on Texas plantations worked in cotton and sugar cane fields. Some helped build roads and fences, kill hogs, shell corn, and dig wells. Those who worked in the master's home cooked, cleaned, washed, ironed, sewed, weaved, cared for white children and served as nurses and midwives. Field hands generally labored "from sun to sun" five days a week and half a day on Saturday and house servants also worked long hours.

Number of slaves in Texas:

- In 1836 Texas had an estimated population of 5,000 slaves.
- By 1845, when Texas joined the United States, the state was home to at least 30,000 slaves.
- The census of 1850 reported 58,161 slaves, 27.4 percent of the population Texas.
- The census of 1860 enumerated 182,566 slaves, 30.2 percent of the total population.

Where did Texas slaves come from?

The great majority of slaves in Texas came with their owners from the older slave states. Sizable numbers, however, came through the domestic slave trade. New Orleans was the center of this trade in the Deep South, but there were slave dealers in Galveston and Houston, too. A few slaves came through the illegal African trade.

Where did they settle in Texas?

The greatest concentration of large slave plantations was along the lower Brazos and Colorado rivers in Brazoria, Matagorda, Fort Bend, and Wharton counties. Brazoria County, for example, was 72 percent slave in 1860.

Contribution to economy of Texas

American slavery was a system of forced labor used to produce cash crops for profit. Slave labor produced cotton (and sugar on the lower Brazos River) for profit and also cultivated the food necessary for self-sufficiency. Slavery promoted development of the agricultural economy; it provided the labor for a 600 percent increase in cotton production during the 1850s.

Life as a Slave Woman

Slave women's days were filled with hard work. Most lived within slave families, but slaves were not allowed to legally marry. Mothers often had to neglect the care of their own children to care for white children. They lived in fear of family members being sold or hired out for long periods of time. Slaves living in towns had more freedom and could attend church, visit friends and live separately from their owners. There was no law prohibiting owners from teaching slaves to read and write; many women who worked in homes were taught to read and write by the slave owner's wife.

Free African American women in Texas

A few African American women lived as free persons in Texas before the Civil War. Some had come to Texas as free individuals; others were freed by their masters. Some were granted money and land through the will of a master. Most free African Americans could read and write, and unlike slaves, could marry and own property.

In 1860 census counted 366 free African Americans in Texas, including 174 women. Many worked as laundresses, seamstresses, cooks, and servants; others were boardinghouse keepers, farmers, business women, and property owners. Harriet Reynolds of Jackson County owner a herd of 6,000 cattle; a widow named Ashworth in Jefferson County owned land worth \$11,444.

Some freed women and their families had to fight for their freedom:

- In 1833 Sally Vince of Harris County was freed by her master in his will. His brother tried to claim her as his slave, but she petitioned the court and won her freedom.
- In 1833 Celia Allen of San Felipe hired William B. Travis to defend her emancipation; she won her case.
- In 1860 Elizabeth Ramsey, a Matagorda County slave, was freed as the result of a fund-raising campaign conducted by her daughter, Louisa Picquet of Cincinnati, Ohio. They had been separated for nearly twenty years

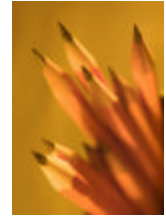
Under the Republic of Texas, free African Americans were not allowed to reside in Texas without the consent of Congress. They had to petition Congress, gathering signatures of white friends, business customers, former masters and mistresses, and their lawyers. Most petitions were denied, but many women stayed in Texas anyway.

- Fanny McFarland of Houston, a laundress, was freed by her master in 1835; Congress refused her petition to stay in Texas, but she remained in Houston until her death in 1866.

After statehood, free African Americans still needed permission of the government to stay in Texas. After Texas joined the Confederacy, it became against the law to free any slaves.

Slave and Free Women

Compare & Contrast Table



After reviewing with your teacher the information on slave women and free African American women in Texas, complete the following table and answer the questions below.

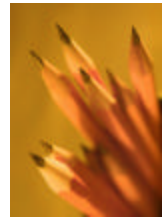
	Examples of types of work	Rights and restrictions	Yes	No
Slave Women	1. 2. 3. 4.	Able to read and write? Could legally marry? Could own property? Could leave Texas?		
Free Women	1. 2. 3. 4.	Able to read and write? Could legally marry? Could own property? Free to stay in Texas?		

Questions:

What was the contribution of slave men and women to the economic development of Texas?

What crops did slave women help raise on Texas plantations? _____

The Long Journey of Silvia King



“I was born in Morocco in Africa and was married and had three children before I was stolen from my husband. I don’t know who it was who stole me, but they took me to France, to a place called Bordeaux, and drugged me, and when I knew anything about it, I was in the bottom of a boat. It seemed like we were in that boat forever, but we came to land and I was put on the block and sold. I found out afterwards from my white folks it was in New Orleans ... I was sold to a planter who had a big plantation in Fayette County, right here in Texas....He bought some more slaves, and they chained us together and marched us up near La Grange in Texas.” -- Silvia King

Source: *The Slave Narratives of Texas* edited by Ron Tyler and Lawrence R. Murphy

Locate on the world map the key points of the journey of slave woman Silvia King:

Morocco, Africa

Bordeaux, France

New Orleans

Fayette County, Texas

La Grange, Texas

How long do you think it would take for a boat to go from Bordeaux to New Orleans in the 1800s?

How long would it take for you to walk from New Orleans to La Grange? What towns would you pass through? What rivers would you cross?

Where Did Slave Women Live in Texas?

Texas County Outline Map (with county names) <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/texas.jpg>

Identify the counties in Texas and the river valleys where most slaves lived.

Mary Madison's Petition to Remain in the State of Texas

This petition was submitted to the Texas Legislature in 1850

The undersigned citizens of the City of Galveston...would respectfully represent to your Honorable body that Mary Madison, a free woman of color, aged about forty-two years, has resided in said city for the last eight or ten years, and during the whole of that time has conducted herself with the strictest propriety and has always demeaned herself, as a good and orderly citizen...She is an honest, sober and industrious woman, and by her labor and care she has accumulated a little property, which she is desirous of enjoying where she has made it: -- that said Mary besides her many good qualities, is a very valuable citizen, in a variety of ways; especially in the capacity of a nurse in cases of sickness; and many citizens and strangers who have been afflicted with disease, have experienced her kindness, her attention and watchfulness, when such qualities are really needed. They would further represent that...in view of her good conduct, her excellent behaviors and her general usefulness, she be allowed her time to remain...in the place where she has so long resided, rather than compel her, at her period of life, to seek a home in another land, and among strangers.

Source: Memorial N. 251, File 64, Letter "M," Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, as reprinted in Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trials and Triumph*, p. 3.

The Case of Mary Madison: What Would You Do?

In small groups, discuss and then answer the following questions:

Why do you think Mary's exact age is unknown?

Why do you think Galveston citizens value Mary's service as a nurse?

What other qualities make her acceptable to Galveston citizens?

Why would it be a hardship for Mary to move out of Texas?

Why do you think the petition emphasizes her conduct and character?

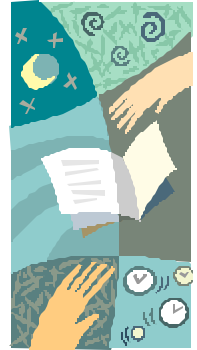
Would you have signed this petition? Why or why not?

Solve a Problem from the Days of Slavery

You are a family living outside of the South before the Civil War trying to buy the freedom of a slave woman in Texas. You need to raise money to send to the owner. How would you convince people outside Texas to contribute money for her freedom? How would you convince the owner in Texas that she should be freed? Write a report describing your activities and why you think they would be effective.

OR

It is 1855. You are the judge in a lawsuit: After his death, a Texas slave owner in his will has granted freedom to a slave woman and has given her money, land and a home. The owner's sons and daughters believe she should remain their slave, with no rights to the money or property. What would be arguments for both sides? How would you rule? Write a report giving your decision and defend your reasons for the ruling.



Keep in mind:

Most white people in Texas in the 1850s believed African Americans should not be free. The Texas legislature prohibited free African Americans from residing in Texas except with special permission from the state government.

Exploring Stories of Texas Slaves

Home Activity

1. Go to the Library of Congress Slave Narratives website <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>.
2. Search photographs by state to select the name of a former slave from your area of Texas.
3. Go back to the Slave Narratives home page <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>.
4. Search for the story of the person you selected by his or her name. Prepare a written report summarizing that slave's story.

Day 2 African American Women in Texas After the Civil War

Procedures

The teacher:

1. Shares with students material on African American women's activities during Reconstruction. (See next page.) Emphasize the obstacles the women faced after emancipation and the activities they engaged in to overcome those obstacles.
2. Distributes chart, "How Did They Overcome Obstacles in Their Way?" for students to complete individually.
3. Distributes "Emancipation Proclamation" excerpts and question sheets. Class works on answers to questions together.
4. Distributes "Remembering Ordinary Heroes: You Are in Charge." Students break into small groups and come up with a plan for memorializing an ordinary African American woman.
5. Distribute "African American Women: Free and Equal?" sheet. Have students write a brief essay in class or at home.

Student Handouts:

- Chart "How Did They Overcome Obstacles in Their Way?"
- "Emancipation Proclamation" excerpts
- "Emancipation Proclamation" question sheet
- Group project sheet "Remembering Ordinary Heroes: You Are in Charge"
- Essay topic "African American Women: Free and Equal?"

African American Women in Texas After the Civil War

(Source: Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph*)

After they were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, announced in Texas on June 19, 1865, most African American women s left their former masters, and started new lives. They faced enormous challenges of rebuilding families, earning a living, and forming new communities. Many worked at the same farm chores as before, but under a sharecropping system within their own families. African American women who moved to towns and cities often worked as servants or took in laundry in their homes. A few became teachers, businesswomen, seamstresses, nurses, and property owners.

Women and Their Families

The first priority of African American women was to locate husbands, parents, and children who had been lost during slavery. Some even searched out of state. Freed women placed the welfare of their children and their families above all other considerations. Marriages had been illegal under slavery, so thousands of couples applied for marriage licenses; some county clerks refused to issue licenses to them. Poverty, poor living condition, and restricted earning power all put stresses on African American families. Many women lived in households headed by males, but including extended family members.

Education

Some women began teaching in schools for African Americans set up by the federal Freedman's Bureau soon after the Civil War. They faced community opposition and harassment, including violent attacks by the Ku Klux Klan. White and black Freedmen's Bureau teachers are harassed and threatened. In 1868 Circleville (near Austin), a female black teacher's school was burned down.

Religion and Community

African American women put tremendous effort into building new communities – organizing churches, Sunday Schools, schools and public celebrations. The church was the center of community social life. It was difficult to raise money for land and construction of church buildings, so some churches were started in homes and even backyards. Women held fundraising events and social activities. Some organized homes for the aged and orphanages, shared food, and provided health care.

Politics and Civil Rights

African American women attended political rallies, organized political clubs, and challenged segregation. In 1868-69 black women in Harris County form two clubs supporting Republican candidates. They supported African American candidates, some of whom served in the Texas legislature. They fought against segregation and violence against blacks by filing grievances with the Freedmen's Bureau and taking whites to court.

- Kizzie and Miranda King, who worked on a plantation near Houston, won a court suit for unpaid wages.
- In 1875, Mary Miller was forced from her seat in the opera house in Galveston, sued for damages and won.
- In 1874, Milly Anderson was denied a seat in the first class railroad car and won a court case in federal court.

How Did They Overcome Obstacles in Their Way?

After discussing the material on African American women after the Civil War, fill in the following table. List at least two items in each box.

	Obstacles	Activities
Family		
Education		
Religion		
Politics/ Civil Rights		

The Emancipation Proclamation (Excerpts)

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America: A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom...

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages...

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

Source: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html

Emancipation Proclamation Question Sheet

The proclamation declares that slaves of which states are now free?

According to this document, who will maintain the freedom of the former slaves?

What are the two things President Lincoln asked newly freed persons to do?

Toward the end of the document, what are three reasons Lincoln gives for issuing the proclamation?

Why do you think slaves in Texas not hear about the Emancipation Proclamation until June 1865?

Remembering Ordinary Heroes – You're in Charge

During Reconstruction, many African American women showed courage and determination, uniting families and standing up to former owners, the Ku Klux Klan, and segregationists, but their deeds have been forgotten in history.

Group Project

You are members of the chamber of commerce tourism committee of a small Texas town. You find out that the 19th century home of an African American woman, a former slave, is about to be demolished to make way for a larger grocery store parking lot. Historians tell you that this woman, whose name was Mattie Long, started the state's first school for blacks after the Civil War and that she kept the school open although she and her family were threatened by the Ku Klux Klan.

The grocery store owner and some shoppers want a bigger parking lot. African American teachers in town and others want to honor her memory. What would you do?

Come up with a plan that would satisfy the people in your town and preserve the history of this "ordinary hero." Preserving the house as a museum would be too costly. How else could you honor the hero in a practical, lasting manner?

Details of Plan:

Benefits of Plan:

How will it be maintained?

How will the community be involved?

African American Women: Free and Equal?

The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed during Reconstruction, giving former slaves the right to vote. It says:

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

Source: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=44&page=transcript>

But this did not mean that ALL former slaves could vote. African American women, like all women in the U.S. could not vote until 1920 and even then African American women in the South were usually denied that right at the polls.

Write an essay on why you think African American men gained the right to vote after the Civil War, but not women.

Janelle Dupont created this lesson plan for the Ruthe Winegarten Foundation. The lesson plan is free to users for educational purposes.