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Slavery, Literacy, and Freedom
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Final Project

Rationale for unit and selected readings:

It is my belief that the written and oratorical aspect of the Abolitionist Movement is not frequently covered in high school classrooms. Many students are aware of the physical resistance African Americans exhibited such as Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad and maybe even Nat Turner's uprising, but many students are unaware that African Americans used their literacy to protest against the institution of slavery. I chose the readings of prominent African American figures of the 19th Century who made a huge impact on the Abolitionist Movement.

I highly anticipate a positive reception of the materials and lessons I plan to share with the English Department of Morse High School (San Diego). Prior to attending the institute, many of my colleagues expressed interest in the subject matter of slavery and are eager for me to share any valuable information and materials I obtain from my attendance.

The San Diego City Schools District is supportive of the instructional materials I plan to use in this unit. Many of the authors that are included in this unit were listed on the tentative syllabus I submitted when I applied for the American Literature through the African American Perspective pilot course. The district's main concern is standard based instruction. The Prentice Hall Anthology I will be using in my class is not aligned to the California English-Language Arts Content Standards. It is essential that all lessons taught in an English class and any supplementary materials used be based on the content standards. All of the lessons designed in this unit have been aligned to a CA standard. Students should exhibit mastery of the state standards through the use of mini-lessons and independent work time. A mini-lesson is a short structured lesson that introduces students to a new skill or concept they must understand prior to working independently.

Abolitionist Writing and Oratory

Course: American Literature through the African American Perspective (11th grade)

Purpose of Unit: Students will garner knowledge about the written and oratorical methods that African Americans used as a way to obtain their freedom and abolish the institution of slavery.

Time Frame: 2 weeks (approximately)

Student Objectives: Students will be able to...

SWBAT: improve their abilities to critically analyze primary source documents.

SWBAT: understand the role that Christianity had in the enslavement of African Americans.

SWBAT: understand the role that black abolitionists took in order to obtain their freedom.

SWBAT: discuss the ways African Americans used their literacy to obtain their freedom.

CA English-Language Arts Content Standards

Reading Comprehension

- **2.1:** Analyze both the features and the rhetorical devices of different types of public documents (e.g., policy statements, speeches, debates, platforms) and the way in which authors use those features and devices.
- **2.4:** Make warranted and reasonable assertions about the author's arguments by using elements of the text to defend and clarify interpretations
- **2.5:** Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
- **2.6:** Critique the power, validity, and truthfulness of arguments set forth in public documents; their appeal to both friendly and hostile audiences; and the extent to which the arguments anticipate and address reader concerns and counterclaims (e.g., appeal to reason, to authority, to pathos and emotion).
- **3.2:** Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view on life, using textual evidence to support the claim.
- **3.3:** Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the "sound" of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both.

Writing Applications

- **2.2:** (c) Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text and other works; (d) demonstrate an understanding of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created.

Materials:

David Walker: *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (excerpt)

Thomas Jefferson: *Notes on the State of Virginia* (excerpt)

Frederick Douglass: *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*

Henry Highland Garnet: *An Address to the Slaves of the United States*

Sojourner Truth: *Ar'n't I a Woman?*

Mini-Lessons:

- (Lecture) The Abolitionist Movement: the purpose, significance, effect on the institution of slavery, etc.
- What is rhetoric?
- Diction and how word choice affects a speaker/writer's tone
- Tone (author's attitude toward subject)
- Use of repetition: anaphora, epistrophe, parallelism
- Implicit vs. Explicit
- What is a philosophical assumption (with emphasis on the definition of an assumption)?
- Valid Arguments
- Appeal to audience (purpose and effect of emotional and ethical appeal)
- Purpose and effect of allusions
- Theme: author's message

David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Students will read the head notes on Walker's life from the *Norton Anthology*, excerpt from the *Preamble*, and an excerpt from *Article One* of Walker's *Appeal*.

An **introduction** to David Walker's *Appeal* (discuss the purpose and structure of the *Appeal*, the effect his *Appeal* had on white and black Americans, and how the impact the *Appeal* had on the Abolitionist Movement)

- **2.5:** *Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.*
- **2.6:** *Critique the power, validity, and truthfulness of arguments set forth in public documents; their appeal to both friendly and hostile audiences; and the extent to which the arguments anticipate and address reader concerns and counterclaims (e.g., appeal to reason, to authority, to pathos and emotion).*

Mini-Lessons:

- Implicit vs. Explicit
- What is a philosophical assumption (with emphasis on the definition of an assumption)?
- Valid Arguments

Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia

Shared Reading: I will read an excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Students will find textual evidence of Jefferson's implicit assumptions and explicit assumptions and state how his assumptions led to his beliefs about the inferiority of the black race. Using the assumptions that Jefferson states, students will critique the "truthfulness" of the arguments that Jefferson poses and then explain how those who were in support of slavery and those who were not in support of slavery might have responded to Jefferson's argument that black Americans were the inferior race.

Assignment: In Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he makes several assumptions about the inferiority of the black race. Using textual evidence for support, state Jefferson's implicit and explicit assumptions about the inferiority of black Americans and how these assumptions led to his beliefs about them.

Using the assumptions that Jefferson states, comment on the emotional impact or reaction that Jefferson's assumptions would have had on those who were in support of slavery and those who were not in support of slavery (especially African Americans).

David Walker's Appeal

Shared reading: I will read an excerpt from the *Preamble* and a short excerpt from *Article One* of Walker's *Appeal* to show how Walker's *Appeal* included a section in response to Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

Assignment:

Walker's *Appeal* explicitly states his views and beliefs about the condition black Americans were facing during the 19th century. Using textual evidence from the *Preamble* and *Article One*, critique the power and validity of at least three arguments Walker makes in defense of black Americans. One of the arguments must be in response to Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

Henry Highland Garnet's Address to the Slave of the United States

Introduction: Students will receive a brief introduction to Henry Highland Garnet. The introduction will include a reading of the head notes from the *Norton Anthology* and a discussion of the role and impact the African American preacher had on the Abolitionist Movement.

Prior to reading Garnet's *Address*, students will have read Patrick Henry's *Give me Liberty or Give Me Death* speech. As a class, we will have already discussed the impact that Christianity had on the institution of slavery.

Mini-lesson:

- Allusions (purpose/effect)

Assignment: Students will read Garnet's *Address* and identify two historical and biblical allusions. For each allusion, students will explain the historical and biblical significance of two of the allusions; explain the point Garnet was attempting to make through the use of the allusion; and whether or not the allusion was effective for the purpose of his speech.

Frederick Douglass' What to the Slave is the 4th of July?

Prior to reading this speech by Douglass, students will have read the *Declaration of Independence* as well as other speeches by Douglass. We will have discussed various features of rhetoric and the purpose of speakers using various features.

- **3.3:** Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the "sound" of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both.

Mini-lesson:

- Verbal irony (sarcasm)
- Diction/Tone (How an writer/speaker's word choice affects tone (author's attitude toward subject))

Assignment: There are two distinctive tones in the beginning and ending of Douglass' 4th of July speech. Compare and contrast the diction and tone Douglass uses in the beginning of his speech to the diction and tone he uses towards the end of his speech. What rhetorical purpose(s) might Douglass have wanted to achieve through designing his speech in this manner?

Assessment

Writing Prompt: Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining how abolitionist writers used Christianity to support their belief that slavery was not of God and should be abolished.

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