

# LESSON 1: LIFE AS A SLAVE

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

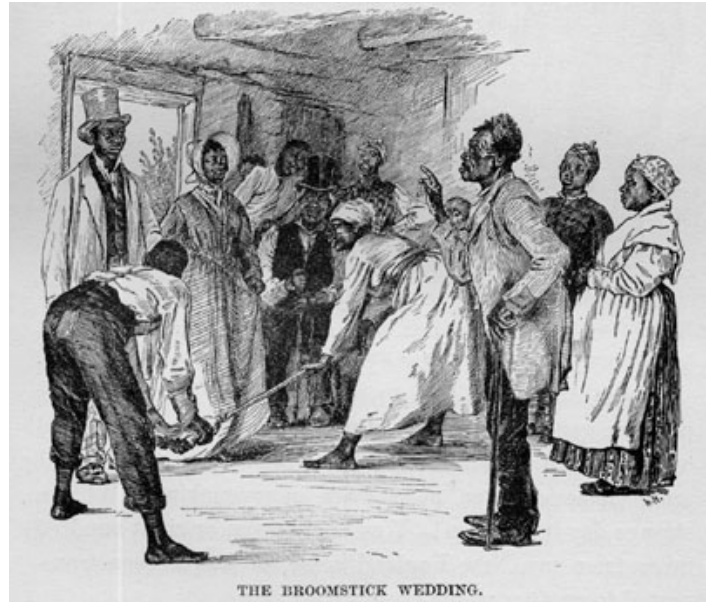
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## INTRODUCTION

American history cannot be understood without the institution of slavery. Slavery shaped the American nation, its economy, its politics, its culture, and its most fundamental principles. For most of American history, the mainland colonies and then the United States were a society of slaves and slaveholders. The American economy was founded upon the production of slave-grown crops. The great staples—tobacco, rice, sugar, and finally cotton—which slave owners sold on an international market, brought capital into the new colonies. That capital eventually funded an enormous eco-

nomics infrastructure upon which the modern American economy was based.

Despite their lack of freedom, slaves created and sustained life in the form of family, churches, schools, and associations of all kinds. These organizations—clandestine and fugitive, fragile and unrecognized—created language and literature, history and aesthetics, as well as a philosophy expressed in story, music, dance, and cuisine. Slaves produced leaders and ideologies that continue to inform American life into the twenty-first century.



THE BROOMSTICK WEDDING.

## Materials

- Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco from the “Slavery in Illinois Kit”
- “Life as a Slave Photo Analysis Questionnaire” (in this lesson plan)
- “Slave Lullabies” Music CD from the book In the Hollow of Your Hand from the “Slavery in Illinois Kit” (optional)
- Tri-Venn Diagram (in this lesson plan)
- Internet access (optional)
- Paper and Pencils
- Photographs of slave life found in the “Slavery in Illinois Kit”(and on this CD)
  - #11 Plantation Slaves, 1790
  - #16 Barbarity of Slavery, 1817
  - #17 Kidnapping Free Blacks
  - #46 Slave Auction
  - #47 Scarred Back of Gordon
  - #48 Slave Children
  - #49 Slave Outside Dwelling
  - #50 Church Service
  - #51 Sketch of Slave
  - #52 Field Hands
  - #53 Slaves at Well
  - #54 Beaufort, SC Family
  - #55 Hopkinson’s Plantation
  - #56 Contraband Camp
  - #57 Emancipated Slaves
  - #58 Contraband Laborers
  - #59 The Banjo Lesson

## Objectives

- Investigate 19<sup>th</sup> century slave community/family life
- Analyze 19<sup>th</sup> century primary source documents
- Interpret visual media
- Engage in dialogue about exploitation in relationships
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Explore prejudice, racism, and discrimination
- Write a narrative employing descriptive strategies

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### PROCEDURE

1. Begin the class by reading the story of *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco aloud to the class.
2. Ask the students to write a reflection about the story in their classroom journal.
3. Play the “Slave Lullabies” music CD while students are working.
4. Divide class into small groups
5. Distribute slavery photographs among groups.
6. Ask student to study the photographs and fill out the “Life as a Slave Photo Analysis Questionnaire.”
7. Assign groups the following geographic locations to base their research from:
  - Upper South, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, the District of Columbia
  - Deep South, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina
  - Border States: Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, Delaware
8. Using classroom texts and additional internet sites, student will research the activity occurring in the photographs distributed among their group. The photographs are divided into the categories of: family, housing, work, leisure time, clothing, brutality, and emancipation.
9. Students will locate a direct slave quote using a primary source, secondary source or on-line source that illustrates the photograph and use it as their thesis statement.
10. As a class discuss the following:
  - Do you think slaves had free time?
  - What might slaves do for entertainment?
  - What was slavery like in the Upper South compared to the Deep South or the Border States?
11. Students will write an historical fictionalized account to illustrate their photograph.
12. Students will incorporate four facts about slave life into their narrative.
13. As a class students will complete a Tri-Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts the regional differences that affected slave life.



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### SLAVE LIFE PHOTO ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

What is happening in the image?

What people do you see?

What are they doing?

How are they dressed?

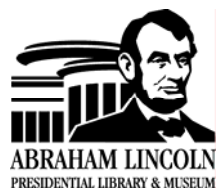
What do their houses look like?

What kind of life do you think they live?

What kind of work do you think they do?

What other things do you notice in this image?

What questions are left unanswered by this image?



# TRI-VENN DIAGRAM

