



# TEACHING HARD HISTORY

A FRAMEWORK  
FOR TEACHING  
AMERICAN SLAVERY



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A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center founded in 1991, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to helping teachers and schools prepare children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy.

The program publishes *Teaching Tolerance* magazine three times a year and provides free educational materials, lessons and tools for educators committed to implementing anti-bias practices in their classrooms and schools. To see all of the resources available from Teaching Tolerance, visit [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org).



TEACHING  
TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

# Teaching **Hard History**

**A K-5 FRAMEWORK FOR  
TEACHING AMERICAN SLAVERY**





## **CONTENTS**

Introduction	4
About the Teaching Hard History Elementary Framework	6
Grades K-2	10
Grades 3-5	18
Acknowledgments	28

# Introduction

Teaching about slavery is hard. It's especially hard in elementary school classrooms, where talking about the worst parts of our history seems at odds with the need to motivate young learners and nurture their self-confidence.

Teaching about slavery, especially to children, challenges educators. Those we've spoken with—especially white teachers—shrink from telling about oppression, emphasizing tales of escape and resistance instead. They worry about making black students feel ashamed, Latinx and Asian students feel excluded and white students feel guilty.

Slavery is hard to teach about for all these reasons—and because its legacy of racism and white supremacy is still with us. That legacy influences the lives of even very young students, permeating our classrooms whether or not we acknowledge it.

Children encounter slavery in one form or another—some through children's literature, some through family lore—as soon as they begin school. Kindergartners learn about Harriet Tubman during Black History Month, and they will meet her again and again, along with other escapees on the Underground Railroad, by fourth or fifth grade, when they're actually “supposed to” learn about slavery.

The same thing happens for the civil rights movement: We teach children about Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks long before we pull back the curtain on the reality of what they struggled against.

This is understandable: We want to provide young children with heroes and with hope. It's easier to cement slavery firmly in the past and tell a story of triumph over evil.

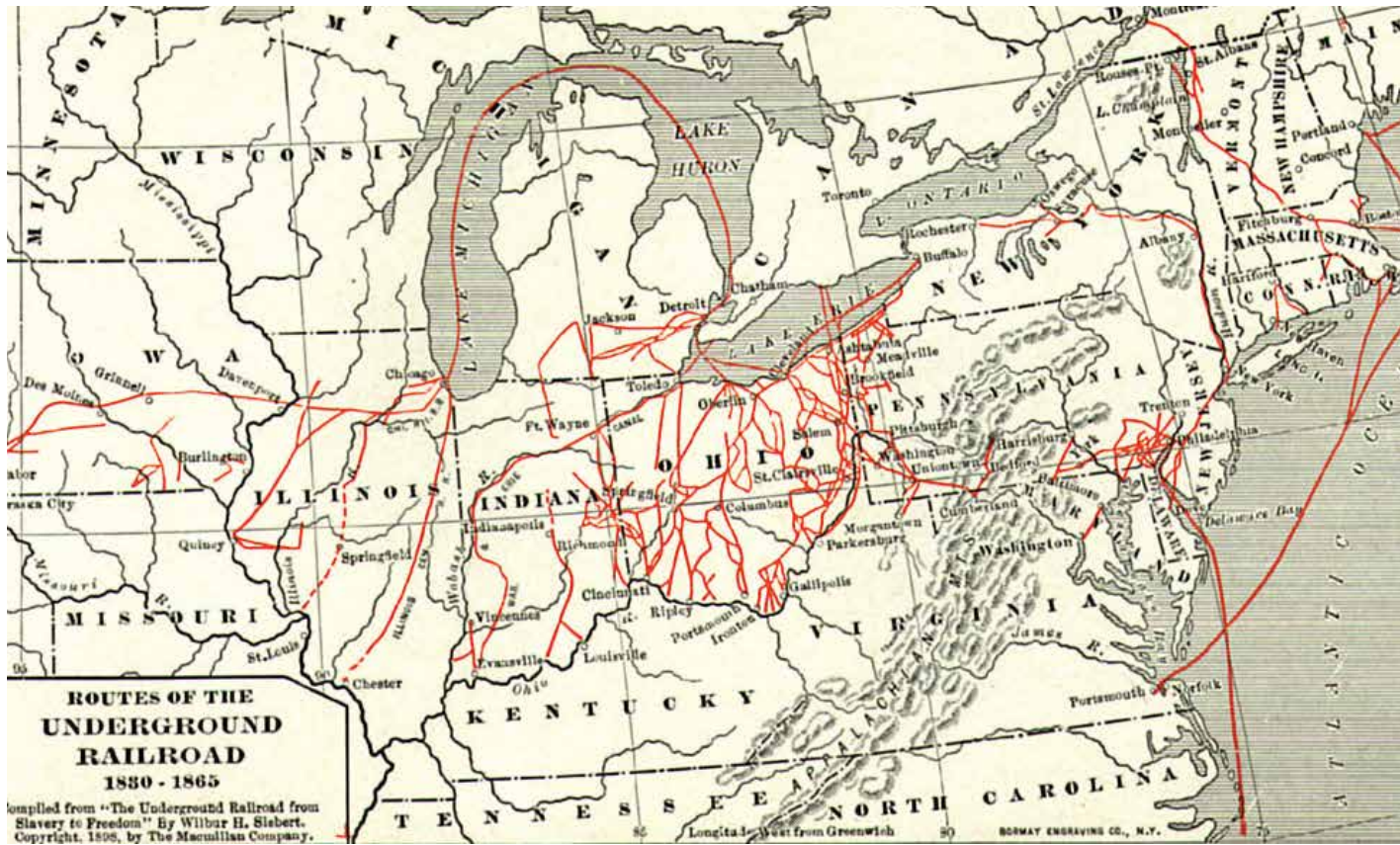
The problem lies in both what we teach and what we don't teach. Field trips to colonial sites rarely include the stories of those who were enslaved there, yet enslaved

people labored in every European colony in the Americas. Each state's history of agriculture and industry stands alone, with little mention of how connected it was to slavery through trade. And Indigenous people? How many of us were taught that they tragically succumbed to disease, but not that they, too, were enslaved?

Whether we mean to or not, we're teaching elementary students about slavery. Our omissions speak as loudly as what we choose to include. And what children learn in the early grades has broad consequences for the rest of their education.

History teachers spend too much time unteaching what their students previously learned. Professor Hasan Jeffries, chair of the Teaching Hard History Advisory Board, talks about having to unteach what his college students learned in high school. High school teachers tell us that they have to unteach what their students learn in earlier grades. This doesn't happen in any other subject: Math, science and reading all begin with fundamentals and build on them.

That's what we're aiming to do in this guide: provide fundamentals that lay a foundation for future learning about slavery in



**"Routes of the Underground Railroad, 1830-1865."** The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses that fugitives from enslavement used during the 19th century to escape to free states and Canada.

the past and in the present. These fundamentals balance oppression with stories of resilience and agency. They show that slavery wasn't a "peculiar" institution at all, but a national institution motivated by a desire for profit. And they invite young people to see that enslaved people were human beings—with names, families, music, food, hopes and dreams.

For teachers concerned about walking the fine line between overloading students and sugarcoating the truth, this framework for the elementary grades identifies age-appropriate, essential knowledge about American slavery, organized thematically within grade bands. For those unsure where to start, the resource is complemented by new additions to the Teaching Hard History Text Library, written especially for K-5 readers. The framework itself also includes concrete recommendations for introducing these ideas to students.

Teaching young people about our hard history should engage them in important questions that have relevance to their lives.

We hope that teachers will choose to engage children with the big questions: what it means to be free and how humans make choices even in the most adverse circumstances.

The framework reflects the work of scholars and experts in history, child development, educational psychology and children's literature. They have built a remarkable path where none existed, and it's one we hope many teachers and curriculum specialists will follow.

# About the Teaching Hard History Elementary Framework

In 2018, we published *Teaching Hard History: A Framework for Teaching American Slavery*. The framework identifies key concepts and summary objectives supported by instructional strategies. It is designed to help secondary teachers cover this important and often-neglected history.

This elementary framework expands our focus to include teachers and students in the elementary grades. It identifies essential knowledge and suggests developmentally appropriate strategies and texts for teaching about slavery. We believe that schools must tell the story of this country’s origins and trajectory early and often. This will help students to understand our past, comprehend current events and envision a better future.

Students deserve to learn the full and true history of the United States. As early as three years old, young people evaluate source credibility to decide if information is reliable.<sup>1</sup> Telling the truth, even when it’s difficult, builds trust—an essential quality for strong relationships between teachers and students. Elementary students also have a strong and personal understanding of the differences between justice and injustice. They often talk and think about freedom, equality and power. They are aware of differences in national origin, culture, ethnicity, race and gender.

Young students want to create a more just and fair society. Teaching about slavery in

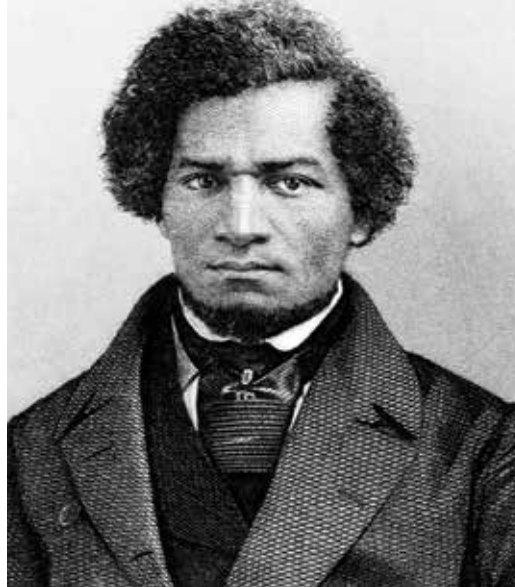
elementary school, done properly, can build on children’s instincts and help students apply them to their classrooms, communities and study of the United States.

Unfortunately, neither state departments of education nor the publishing industry provide effective guidance for teaching about slavery to young people. This is particularly true in elementary school. Teachers are asked to celebrate Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass as early as kindergarten, even though their state’s curriculum may not include slavery until fourth grade. In Ohio, for example, the state elementary social studies standards mention slavery only once, in the fourth grade: “Sectional issues divided the United States after the War of 1812. Ohio played a key role in these issues, particularly with the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad.” In other words, the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan D. Lane, Henry M. Wellman and Susan A. Gelman. “Informants’ Traits Weigh Heavily in Young Children’s Trust in Testimony and in Their Epistemic Inferences.” *Child Development* 84, no. 4 (December 13, 2012): 1253–1268.





standards seem to expect that teachers will cover abolition before they cover slavery.

Elementary educators face many obstacles when it comes to social studies instruction. They are accountable for teaching math, reading and science. Usually, teachers specialize in one of those areas rather than in social studies—a subject generally left out of state-wide testing regimes. There is little support for teachers in this area. School libraries and English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms may contain many books about the Underground Railroad, but none about the day-to-day lives of enslaved families and children.

What's missing is guidance about how and when to teach this important topic. This guide fills that gap. To inform our work, Teaching Tolerance sought advice from teachers, historians and experts in elementary education.

Done correctly, teaching about slavery covers all 10 of the major thematic strands for social studies education recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies.<sup>2</sup> It opens possibilities for classroom conversations

that address important and essential issues. And it fits into existing instructional plans. While each state's curriculum differs, all—in ELA and social studies across all grade levels—offer opportunities to explore this topic even though they rarely offer formal geography or history until the fourth grade.

As students learn about the history of slavery using this framework, they engage in conversations about the meaning and value of freedom. They analyze how power organizes our past and present. When we prepare young students to understand the larger arc of American history, they learn about identity, diversity, culture, time, change, citizenship, conflict, imperialism and capitalism.

Slavery is a fundamental part of United States history. Just as history instruction begins in elementary school, so too should learning about slavery. By waiting until high school to study this hard history, we do students a disservice that hampers their ability to understand both American history and current events.

Sugarcoating or ignoring slavery until later grades makes students more upset by or even resistant to true stories about American history. To be clear: We are not saying that kindergarten teachers must enumerate the grim details of the Middle Passage or the minutia of

<sup>2</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Executive Summary. (October 22, 2018). <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary>.

the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Instead, they should intentionally build instruction that prepares students to understand the long, multidimensional history of slavery and its continuing consequences. Long before we teach algebra, we teach its component parts. We should structure history instruction in the same way.

As educators read this guide, there are a few guiding principles to keep in mind.

■ **Be ready to talk about race.**

It is impossible to teach about slavery without talking about race, racism and white supremacy—something that makes many teachers, particularly white teachers, uncomfortable. But talking about race, especially encouraging students to understand it as a social construction rather than a biological fact, can be an opportunity to have productive and thoughtful conversations among students, if properly structured. First, teachers should take some time to consider their own identities and the way that those identities structure how they see the world. There are a number of resources at [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org) to help with this process. Teachers should also consider the makeup of their classroom and develop fluency with culturally sustaining pedagogical strategies that recognize and draw upon students' identities as assets for learning.

■ **Teach about commonalities.**

When teaching about other eras and cultures, it is important to focus on similarities with students' lives before moving to discuss differences. Learning about “cultural universals” such as art forms, group rules, social organization, basic needs, language and celebrations helps students to recognize that people are bound together by similarities regardless of group membership.<sup>3</sup> When students appreciate commonalities, they are also less likely to express fear or stereotypes about

members of other groups.<sup>4</sup> This approach also helps students to build empathy, an essential skill for social and emotional development. Students might examine stories about children in other communities, children living in slavery or the cultural practices of enslaved people to find similarities with their own experiences.

■ **Center the stories of enslaved people.**

One common mistake is to begin by discussing the evils of slavery. Doing so subtly communicates that enslaved people lacked agency and culture. Instead, start by learning about the diversity of African kingdoms and Native nations, including their intellectual and cultural traditions. Focusing on specific nations (for example, the Benin Empire or the Onondaga Nation) will give depth and specificity to these discussions. Students should learn that people were doctors, teachers, artists and community leaders before they were enslaved. This approach begins by focusing on the strengths and humanity of people who were enslaved. Once discussing slavery, students should center the humanity of enslaved people by exploring sources that speak to the diverse experiences of enslaved people from their own perspectives and in the words of their descendants.

■ **Embed civics education.**

When students learn about the history of American slavery, they have ample opportunities to explore the many dimensions of civics. First, students should consider the nature of power and authority. They should describe what it means to have power and identify ways that people use power to help, harm and influence situations. Beginning with examples from their classroom, families and communities, students can examine how power is gained, used and justified. Teachers should ask students what makes authority legitimate. As they learn more about

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3 Jere Brophy and Janet Alleman. “Learning and Teaching about Cultural Universals in Primary-Grade Social Studies.” *The Elementary School Journal* 103, no. 2 (November 2002): 99–114.

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4 Patricia G. Ramsey, “Growing up with the contradictions of race and class.” *Young Children* 50, no. 6 (September 1995): 12–22.

the history of slavery, students should begin to understand the layers of U.S. government (local, state, tribal and national) and the idea that rules can change from place to place. Finally, the study of American slavery creates opportunities to learn about activism and action civics. Students should study examples and role models from the past and present, and ask themselves: “How can I make a difference?”

#### **Teach about conflict and change.**

The history of American slavery is a story of terrible oppression; at the same time, it is also a story of incredible resistance and resilience. Students should learn that enslaved people wanted to be free, and that while some did escape, it was extraordinarily difficult. Teachers should be careful to show students that enslaved people resisted in other ways, such as learning to read colonial languages or by developing ceremonies like “jumping the broom” when marriage was forbidden. Students should know that slavery was widespread and not, as commonly thought, restricted to people of African descent or contained in the South. They should also know that many people did not agree with slavery and wanted to end it. These conversations should lead into discussions about current injustices—particularly those that continue to disenfranchise and oppress the descendants of enslaved people—and possibilities for activism and reform.

# Grades K–2

In the early elementary grades, students are aware of their own identities and are curious about the differences between people, communities and cultures. They are developing a sense of historical time and express interest in learning about the past. Students in grades K–2 notice diversity in race, gender, class and ability—and they want to learn more. Ideas of fairness and equality are important to them, and teachers should build on these concepts to introduce the idea of slavery and the experiences of enslaved people.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 1: STUDENTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT THE MEANING OF FREEDOM.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

- 1.A** Being free means being able to choose what your life looks like without interference from others.
- 1.B** People and institutions have the ability to restrict freedom by using power to make rules and punishment to make people obey them. People also restrict freedom by intimidating people into acting in certain ways or into not doing certain things.
- 1.C** Everybody wants to be free, but some people have more freedom and privileges than other people.
- 1.D** Equality means that the same freedoms are held by all people, regardless of their individual or group identities.
- 1.E** Equity is when people have what they need to be successful regardless of their identities.
- 1.F** People often make rules to serve their own interests. This means that sometimes rules are unfair, but people can work to change them.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Beginning with examples from their classroom, families and communities, students can examine how power is gained, used and explained. They should describe what it means to have power and identify ways that people use power to help, harm and influence situations.

Students should examine why societies create rules by discussing the role of rules in classrooms, families and communities. When teaching about rules and authority, challenge students to think about how rules and power can be used to limit people’s freedom, and how people fight to assert their own agency.

Encourage students to talk about fairness, equality and equity. Students should discuss personal experiences when they have seen rules applied in fair and unfair ways. Ask students how they responded in these situations, and how other people responded when they saw unfair treatment. Students should contrast equity and equality, identifying current problems where there is a need to fight for equity.

Many books, including those used to teach reading, can be springboards for these conversations. Teachers do not need to have texts specific to slavery to begin the discussion about these underlying ideas with young students.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 2: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT SLAVERY IS WHEN A PERSON OWNS ANOTHER PERSON AS PROPERTY.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**2.A** “Enslaved person” is preferable to “slave” because a person is not a thing.

**2.B** Slavery has been allowed in many societies throughout human history and was legal in what is now the United States for hundreds of years.

**2.C** The main purpose of enslaving people is to make money. Enslaved people rarely earn money for their work.

**2.D** Many kinds of people can be enslaved, including children.

**2.E** When people are enslaved, they do not have freedom. Their enslavers control their actions and can say where they move, what job they do, what food they will eat, what clothes they will wear, whom they will live with, whether they can go to school and many other parts of their lives.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Help students understand that the language we use changes over time. Teachers should explain that while “enslaved person” is preferable, “slave/slaves” is important contextually because that was the language of the time and how many enslaved people were identified and identified themselves.

Students need to understand different economic positions (e.g., boss, worker, owner) in order to understand the relationship between work and pay.

Students should brainstorm different kinds of jobs and identify key tasks that workers in these jobs have to do. They should learn about the relationship between work and pay, including the idea that people earn different wages (or no wages at all) for different kinds of work.

Help students to understand the idea of ownership and property, beginning with their

personal possessions. Discuss the differences between owning something, paying to use it, borrowing it and stealing it.

Identify the major differences between people and things. Students can identify the parts of being a human that makes us different from objects. One key to understanding slavery is the idea that people thought about others as things, rather than as humans. How do we treat each other in ways that acknowledge each other’s humanity?

Students should know that Columbus enslaved Indigenous people when he arrived in the Americas, and that many early colonial expeditions to the Americas, including Ponce de León’s travels through what is now Florida, were motivated by the desire to enslave people.





**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 3: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT ENSLAVED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND AFRICANS CAME FROM NATIONS WITH DIVERSE CULTURES AND TRADITIONS AND THAT THEY CONTINUED MANY OF THESE TRADITIONS WHILE ENSLAVED.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**3.A** Indigenous peoples have always governed their own nations in the lands that are now the United States.

**3.B** Europeans enslaved millions of Indigenous people when they invaded the Americas. Other Indigenous communities were attacked through warfare, diseases, land dispossession and forced assimilation.

**3.C** The rich cultures of Indigenous people

persisted despite the colonial invasion. Many people are working to support the resurgence of Indigenous languages and ways of seeing the world.

**3.D** Africa is a continent that has always been home to many people, nations and cultures.

**3.E** Millions of people were brought against their will from Africa and enslaved in the Americas.

**3.F** Enslaved Africans brought skills, food, music, clothing, language and religious practices with them to the Americas, a cultural heritage that is still with us in our daily lives.

### How Can I Teach This?

Learning about culture should begin with students exploring their own identities and identifying parts of their lives that constitute their home culture. Comparing similarities and differences between cultures in the classroom community will prepare students to consider more unfamiliar cultures.

When teaching about other eras, nations and cultures, focus on similarities with students' lives first before moving to discuss differences. Learning about "cultural universals" such as art forms, group rules, social organization, family structures, basic needs, language and celebrations helps students to recognize that people are bound together by similarities, regardless of group membership.

Students should learn about music, arts, religion and food from a selection of nations. They should compare and contrast those experiences, asking: "What is the same about these traditions?" "What is different?" "How are these the same as and different from your culture?" Exploring the commonalities between students' home cultures and the diverse cultures of Indigenous and African peoples will help students to have empathy for those who were enslaved.

Use trade books that establish the humanity of Indigenous and African people before introducing the idea of enslavement. Choose books such as *Bowwow Powwow* and *The People Shall Continue*.

As you introduce the idea of slavery, use books that show the roots of enslaved people in their home cultures, such as *Now Let Me Fly: The Story of a Slave Family, In the Time of Drums* and *Never Forgotten*.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 4: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT ENSLAVED PEOPLE HAD FAMILIES THAT COULD BE SPLIT UP AT ANY TIME.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**4.A** Enslaved people loved their families, just like other people.

**4.B** Enslavers often separated families to make more money or as punishment. Once separated, families were rarely able to communicate or reunite. After the end of slavery, many formerly enslaved people searched long and hard, often in vain, to find their missing family members.

**4.C** When children were not allowed to live with their families, other enslaved people took care of them.

**4.D** About half of all enslaved people lived under the same roof as the families they worked for. Sometimes they ate the same food and wore the same clothes.

**How Can I Teach This?**

At first, teachers should discuss the very nature of family. They should begin by asking questions such as: “Who makes a family?” “What do families do for each other?” “How does it feel to be part of a family?” The answers to these questions will provide fertile material for considering how enslaved people experienced family, while helping students to understand the ways that family members risked their lives for each other.

Beginning to talk about the importance of families and their shared history can prepare students to understand the trauma of the separation of enslaved families. Books like *Saltypie*

show students examples of family resilience in the face of adversity.

Use trade books that show the close relationships and shared traditions among some enslaved families, such as *Sky Sash So Blue, Circle Unbroken* and *Tea Cakes for Tosh*. Encourage students to identify the ways that their family relationships are similar to those of these enslaved people.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 5: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT ENSLAVED PEOPLE HATED BEING ENSLAVED, AND RESISTED BONDAGE IN MANY WAYS.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**5.A** Enslaved people wanted to escape to freedom. Although it was very difficult and largely impossible, some did manage to escape.

**5.B** Laws, including the U.S. Constitution, made slavery legal and escaping illegal. Enslaved people were often hunted and returned to slavery.

**5.C** Many people who escaped slavery went on to fight for freedom for all enslaved people.

**5.D** Enslaved people resisted slavery to try and obtain some freedom in the midst of their enslavement. Resistance took many forms, ranging from everyday actions like slowing down work to armed rebellion.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Students may not think about how learning to read and write European languages could be forms of resistance. Trade books such as *Midnight Teacher* and *Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton* show students how difficult and important it was for enslaved people to learn European languages.

Cultural practices among enslaved people were often forms of resistance. Students can learn about ceremonies like “jumping the broom,” developed when marriage was forbidden, using a text like *Ellen’s Broom*. Age

appropriate books such as *The Patchwork Path*, *The Secret to Freedom* and *Follow the Drinking Gourd* show how art forms like quilting and song served a dual purpose, offering directions for escape.

To show how difficult it was to escape slavery, students can read *Henry's Freedom Box* or *Seven Miles to Freedom*, identifying the distances covered in those books on a map and comparing them to the distances that they cover every day.

The Underground Railroad can captivate students at this age, and teachers can use escape stories to show that not every person supported slavery. By identifying the ways that some free people helped enslaved people find freedom, teachers can encourage students to think about how they can take part in helping others obtain liberation from oppression.

It is important to show students that many formerly enslaved people became fierce and influential advocates for abolishing slavery, including Frederick Douglass.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 6: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT ENSLAVED PEOPLE TRIED TO MAINTAIN THEIR CULTURES WHILE BUILDING NEW TRADITIONS THAT CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**6.A** Music was very important in the lives of enslaved people, and the music they created shapes popular music today.

**6.A** Enslaved people drew from oral traditions in Indigenous and African cultures to pass on stories, history, culture and teachings.

**6.A** Cultural practices including crafts and food that developed in Indigenous and African cultures continue to this day.

**How Can I Teach This?**

The Library of Congress has multiple online collections that include the music of enslaved people, including recordings of freed people

singing and playing music they learned while enslaved. [t-t.site/slavery1k5](https://t-t.site/slavery1k5)

Introduce students to blues music by listening to Vera Hall sing “Trouble So Hard” and discussing the song’s roots in the experience of enslaved people. [t-t.site/slavery2k5](https://t-t.site/slavery2k5)

Teachers can similarly introduce spirituals using online collections. Some of the most famous spirituals, including “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Roll, Jordan, Roll” were composed by Wallace and Minerva Willis, enslaved African Americans who lived in the Choctaw Nation. [t-t.site/slavery3k5](https://t-t.site/slavery3k5)

Learn about the lasting influence of Indigenous storytelling with students using books like *Chukfi Rabbit's Big, Bad Bellyache* or *The Origin of the Milky Way and Other Living Stories of the Cherokee*.



The “Br’er Rabbit” folktales provide examples of stories that originated among the enslaved African population as a way to teach survival skills to enslaved children. When exploring these stories, be careful to use collections such as *Jump! The Adventures of Brer Rabbit*, which avoid the racism of earlier compilations by white folklorists.

The Minnesota Department of Education’s Department of Indian Education offers excellent resources for teaching about Indigenous oral traditions and practices. [t-t.site/slavery4k5](https://t-t.site/slavery4k5)



**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 7: STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT ENSLAVERS EXPLOITED THE MANY TYPES OF HIGHLY SKILLED LABOR OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE FOR THEIR OWN PROFIT.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**7.A** Enslaved people did many different kinds of work depending on place, time and gender.

**7.A** Although most enslaved people could not make money from their work, their enslavers did.

**7.A** The forced labor of enslaved people built many important buildings and institutions. European colonization itself depended on the work of Indigenous people and, later, Africans.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Ask students to examine the wide variety of work that enslaved people did by examining lists of the occupations of enslaved people, such as those published in the colonial-era Virginia Gazette. Which of these occupations are familiar? Which are not? [t-t.site/slavery5k5](http://t-t.site/slavery5k5)

Students should learn about the idea of profit and how it is generated. To begin this conversation, have students examine a business like a farm, explaining how it works and makes money by producing resources for sale. Then make connections to the role of laborers in a business and the importance of their pay. Ask students to think about why enslaved people were not paid and what impact that had.

Make sure to include the many kinds of work that enslaved women did, including fieldwork and work that many upper- and middle-class European women would not do. Students may not think about household labor as “work,” so it is important to encourage them to think about the labor involved in cooking, cleaning, making clothes and other household maintenance during these centuries.

Read trade books about the skilled labor of enslaved people such as *Dave the Potter* and *Brick by Brick*, encouraging students to discuss the ways that those workers created valuable commodities.

Show students images of some of the

important structures that were built by enslaved people, including the White House, the U.S. Capitol, major American railroads and Thomas Jefferson’s estate at Monticello.

When students study colonial times, make sure to include the experiences of enslaved people and Indigenous people living in and nearby the colonies students are discussing.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 8: STUDENTS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT SLAVERY AND RACE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED, THAT SLAVERY CAME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH BLACKNESS, AND THAT WHITE PEOPLE DEVELOPED RACIST IDEAS TO JUSTIFY ENSLAVING PEOPLE OF COLOR.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**8.A** Differences, whether real or perceived, can make some people feel that it is okay to treat others badly, to exploit other people and to believe that some people are better than others.

**8.B** The power of ownership and enslavement made people feel that their perceived superiority was real.

**8.C** Enslavers punished and tortured people because they felt superior and wanted to make money.

**8.D** Perceptions of racial differences remain in the United States today. These perceptions continue to impact whether all people are truly free.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Students should consider how people perceive differences and the ways that these perceptions can become prejudices. Activities including examining portraits and creating paper plate portraits will help to make these conversations concrete. [t-t.site/slavery6k5](http://t-t.site/slavery6k5) • [t-t.site/slavery7k5](http://t-t.site/slavery7k5)

Books such as *The Skin You Live In*, *The Colors of Us*, *Let’s Talk About Race* and *Red: A Crayon’s Story* provide accessible entry points to engage students in conversations about the



social perceptions of and construction of race.

A series of lessons about the “Different Colors of Beauty” offers concrete and age appropriate activities to support examination of skin color and diversity. [t-t.site/slavery8k5](http://t-t.site/slavery8k5)

Students should learn that slavery was not always a function of race. Students should also learn that many Indigenous people and Africans were enslavers before (and, in some cases, after) European invasions, and that older practices of slavery were not racialized.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 9: STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT MANY PEOPLE WORKED INDIVIDUALLY AND IN GROUPS TO END SLAVERY.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**9.A** Once they escaped, many people who had been enslaved worked to change the laws that allowed slavery.

**9.B** Not every white person agreed with slavery. Some joined groups that tried to convince people in power to end slavery.

**9.C** Although it was difficult, slavery eventually became illegal. However, even though slavery became illegal, labor exploitation and the oppression of black and Indigenous people have never gone away.

### How Can I Teach This?

Some of the leading voices for the abolition of slavery were the formerly enslaved. Students should learn about people like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth to appreciate their heroism and activism. The story of Mum Bett and the end of slavery in Massachusetts, told through the book *Mumbet's Declaration of Independence*, can give students a case study.

Students should begin to understand the layers of government (local, state, tribal and national) and the idea that rules can change from place to place and gradually over time. To approach the idea that there are different rules in different places, start by encouraging students to discuss the different rules they follow in different contexts, for example, the difference between what is acceptable in inside play and outside play.

Learning about the abolition movement gives students a chance to consider what it means to recognize and stand up against injustice. Drawing from Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice Standards, teachers can create some compelling questions to push this conversation forward, encouraging discussion of circumstances that students and their families face. Students should study examples and role models from the past and present, and ask themselves: “How can I make a difference?” Connecting to initial discussions about the nature of freedom, they should

also discuss what it means for some people to have the choice to act while others do not. [t-t.site/slavery9k5](http://t-t.site/slavery9k5)

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 10: STUDENTS WILL KNOW  
SLAVERY WAS THE CAUSE OF THE CIVIL WAR.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**10.A** People in the United States didn't agree about slavery. Some believed it was wrong and should be ended; some didn't mind it but didn't want more people to be enslaved in new places; and others wanted to spread slavery to new states. People in the last group decided to secede from, or leave, the United States so that they could continue enslaving people.

**10.B** The United States, or the Union, went to war to stop some states from leaving. This is called the Civil War.

**10.C** As the Union Army won victories, many enslaved people freed themselves by escaping to the free side; many also helped the Union Army, including by fighting.

**10.D** Indigenous people fought on both sides of the war. For many Native nations, the Civil War was a war fought in a country not their own about issues that had little to do with them.

**10.E** When the Union finally won the war, its leaders decided to end slavery.

**How Can I Teach This?**

To lay the groundwork for the conflicts that resulted in the Civil War, students should also learn about peace and how it manifests in the classroom. They can discuss questions such as: "What is peace?" "Why do we want peace?" "What makes peace helpful in our classroom?" "If things are peaceful, who benefits?" Teachers can help students to consider the possible courses of action when people disagree, including conflict resolution.

Using trade books such as *Under the Freedom Tree* and *Pink and Say*, students can learn about the clash between the Union and Confederate armies.

Discussing the many enslaved people who escaped when the Union armies were nearby and assisted the Union will help students to understand that people did not want to be enslaved and greatly helped to end slavery.

Teachers should lay the groundwork for understanding how subjugation of African Americans and Indigenous peoples continued after the Civil War.

Not everyone was satisfied with the terms of surrender that ended the war. Beginning with examples of conflicts that are resolved even though both sides do not agree and drawing on earlier discussions of peace will help students to think about the idea of compromise. Students can discuss what happens when resolutions are met that don't please both sides, or if there is not a solution that makes everyone happy.

The many names for the Civil War create an opportunity to engage students in a discussion of the importance of language. Encourage students to consider the ways that what you call something reflects what you think it means. Students can examine the differences between calling the Civil War the "War Between the States," "Freedom War," "War for Southern Independence" or "War of the Rebellion."

# Grades 3–5

In the upper elementary grades, students are ready to build on prior knowledge, applying it to stories and concrete situations. In most states, these grades study geography and state history, often including a first formal look at national history. Since the social studies focus in upper elementary is usually on people, biographies and specific events, the topic of slavery should be approached in the same way. Examining the geographic and economic dimensions of enslavement while adding historical detail will elicit curiosity and engagement. At this age, students become acutely aware of injustices and how they play out in current events, so it is imperative that teachers help them make connections of what’s happening today to the past. Finally, this is the time to help them explore how history wasn’t a straight line of progress—that it has always had starts, stops and missed opportunities.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 11: STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT THE MAIN PURPOSE OF AMERICAN SLAVERY WAS TO MAKE MONEY FOR ENSLAVERS.**

## What Else Should My Students Know?

**11.A** Labor produces goods and services that can be exchanged for money or other goods and services.

**11.B** Because enslavers were trying to make money, regardless of their impact on other people, they did not pay the people they enslaved and provided them with only the minimum food, housing and clothing needed to keep them working.

**11.C** Even free people who did not enslave others benefited from slavery because it kept the prices of goods and services low while building infrastructure and industries.

**11.D** People were enslaved in different ways depending on place and time. Most enslaved people were in bondage for their entire lives, and many, including all enslaved Africans, inherited the condition from their parents.

**11.E** Enslaved people performed many different kinds of work, depending on age, gender and location, and many were highly skilled. Most did not work on plantations. About half of all enslaved people in what is now the United States lived under the same roof as their enslavers and performed hard household work.

## How Can I Teach This?

In capitalist economic systems, all people are producers and consumers. To start, encourage students to identify the ways they consume goods and services, identifying who provides them and where they come from. Who makes the things that they use and wear? Where do

those people live? What are their lives like? Who makes money by producing and selling those things? Students can examine the labels on clothing to learn where these goods are produced. Exploring the persistence of contemporary labor exploitation and activism to end conditions such as sweatshop labor will help students to understand the continuing relevance of these discussions.

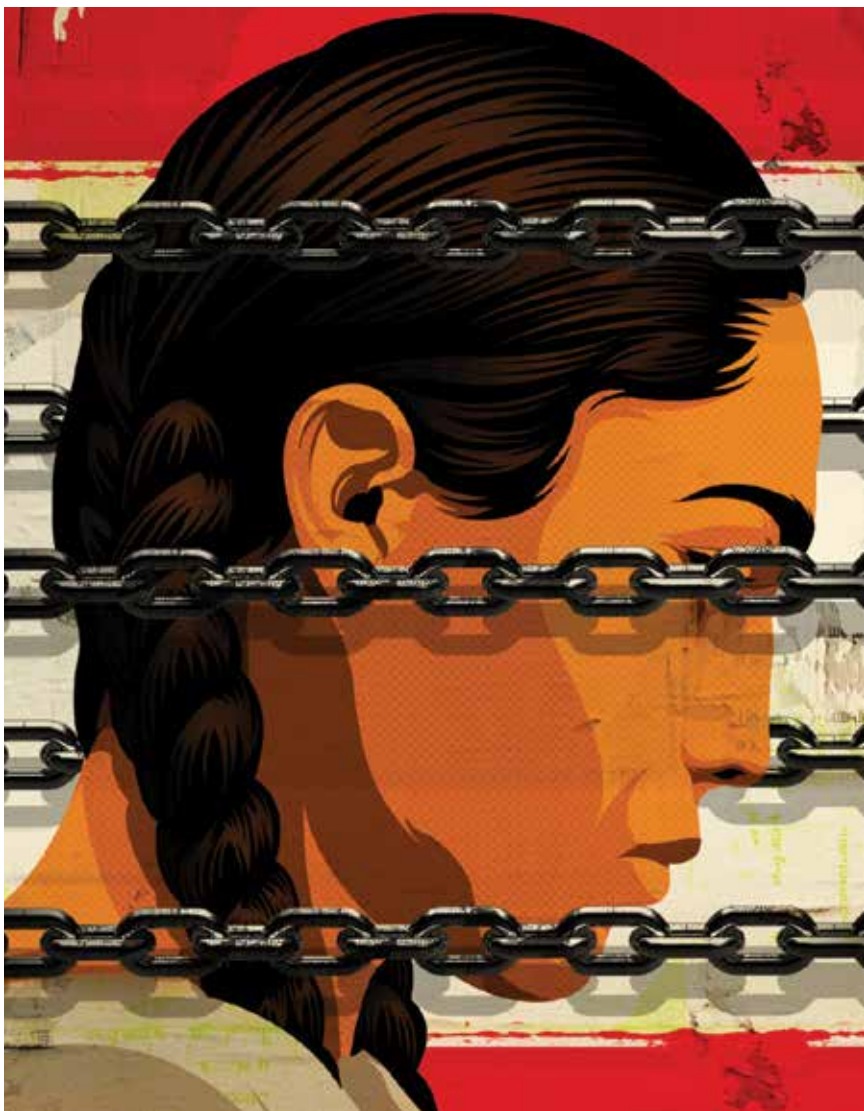
Students need to know that slavery was first and primarily an economic institution (or a way to produce goods and services). Enslavers and traders were motivated by prioritizing their own economic gain over the humanity of other people. Historians now understand that while racism was a major rationalization for enslavement, it was not the primary cause.

As students understand how the work of enslaved people generated profit, they should examine how non-enslaving white people also benefited from slavery. Beginning with the differences between upstanders and bystanders can lead into a discussion about people who don't say anything when they see injustices taking place and people who do not see injustices in the first place.

Exploring the economics of the slaving industry will also help students to understand that many jobs were dependent on the slave trade, including work in mills, banking, food production, textiles and the shipping industry. Students should also consider the difficulty of household labor (cooking, cleaning, sewing, raising children, etc.) to understand the economic value that enslaved people added to households in, for example, colonial New England. Field trips to historic sites—even if not directly related to slavery—offer an opportunity to explore the labor needed to maintain households, farms and factories.

“Runaway slave” ads also show that enslaved people worked different types of jobs and had different skills. Many advertisements are collected online in the Freedom on the Move database. [t-t.site/slavery10k5](http://t-t.site/slavery10k5)

By reading the narratives of formerly enslaved people and trade books such as *Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives*



*and Dreams*, students should learn that being assigned a monetary value was a dehumanizing action that did not diminish the actual humanity of the enslaved person.

Reading excerpts from the accounts collected in the book *Growing Up in Slavery* will help students to understand the difficult lives of enslaved children.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 12: SLAVERY IN ALL THE PLACES THAT ARE NOW THE UNITED STATES BEGAN WITH THE ENSLAVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.**

#### **What Else Should My Students Know?**

**12.A** Before the European invasion, many Native nations practiced slavery, mostly as captivity after warfare.

**12.B** Europeans dramatically increased the scope and nature of Indigenous slavery.

**12.C** Europeans enslaved between 2.5 million and 5 million Indigenous people throughout the Americas. Many were sold globally for enslavement elsewhere. Most enslaved Indigenous people were women and children.

**12.D** White people’s enslavement of Indigenous people—part of the exploitation of Indigenous labor and the theft of Indigenous land—adversely affected every community that it touched.

### How Can I Teach This?

Compare historical and contemporary maps of Native nations. Students should identify different communities and map the ways that their boundaries and locations have changed.

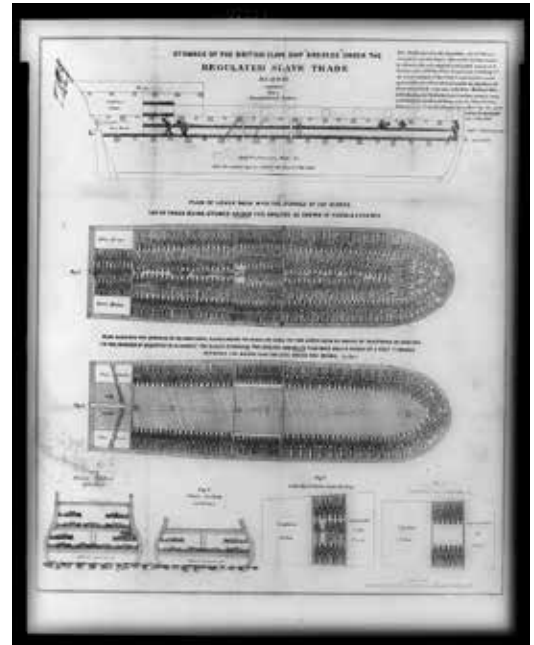
Many students may be surprised to learn about the extent of Indigenous slavery. Encourage students to critically examine textbook representations and popular stories about enslavers such as Columbus and Ponce de León.

Students should know that people in all American colonies practiced slavery. By mapping the geography and economies of different parts of the colonies, students can learn that enslaved people performed different kinds of labor depending on their location—although most enslaved people in what is now the United States lived in and worked for households.

Use learning about the enslavement of Indigenous peoples to go beyond the common “North-South” divide. For example, students can learn about enslavement in western territories such as California, New Mexico and Utah. Here, most enslaved people were Indigenous people forced to labor in a variety of places, including mines, farms, ranches, households and small businesses.

Students should learn that colonial enslavement of Indigenous people was integral to colonization, settlement and western expansion into the modern era. There are many examples that will engage students for illustration, such as the California Gold Rush, the

Plains Wars of the 1870s, the Southwestern wars against the Utes and Navajo, and the Mormon settlement of Utah.



**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 13: EUROPEAN COLONISTS EXPANDED SLAVERY BY FORCING AFRICANS TO COME TO THE AMERICAS.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**13.A** The African continent has always been full of diverse and thriving societies with rich histories and traditions, but slavery adversely affected every community that it touched.

**13.B** At least 12.5 million Africans were captured and forced into ships going to the Americas, most arriving in the Caribbean, South America and Central America, where they were sold. One in four of these enslaved people were children.

**13.C** Enslaved Africans came from many places, including the continental interior. They then endured the Middle Passage, the voyage of enslaved people from the west coast of Africa to

the Americas. Nearly half of captured Africans died on the journey from their homes to the coast and then to the Americas.

### How Can I Teach This?

Compare historical and contemporary maps of African nations. Students should identify different communities and map the ways that their boundaries and locations have changed.

Using world maps, students should locate major colonial powers and trace their global trading routes. They should learn that European countries claimed land all over the world, including in the Americas. The colonial powers took other peoples' resources, including human labor, to make their own countries rich.

Teach about the Middle Passage. Books such as *The Kidnapped Prince*, *Amistad: The Story of a Slave Ship* and *From Slave Ship to Freedom Road* will help to center the humanity of enslaved people. The diagram "Stowage on the Slave Ship Brookes, 1788" represents 18th-century guidelines for transporting enslaved people during the Middle Passage. This document was created and used by abolitionists to show that even regulated conditions were inhumane.

[t-t.site/slavery11k5](http://t-t.site/slavery11k5)

Integrate with state history: As you examine the economic development of your own state, look for connections to slavery. Finding and exploring connections to the history of your state or territory will help students to understand that the history of enslavement is American history and not only regional, African American history or Indigenous history.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 14: ENSLAVERS ADOPTED AND SPREAD FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT RACIAL INFERIORITY, INCLUDING MANY THAT STILL IMPACT US TODAY.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**14.A** At first, enslavers justified slavery by saying that Africans and Indigenous people were inferior to Europeans because of religious and cultural differences.

**14.B** Colonists believed that Europeans were a superior civilization and that Christianity was a superior religion.

**14.C** Ideas about race and skin color developed over time to justify the system of slavery.

**14.D** False stories about white supremacy that were developed to justify colonialism and enslavement continue to impact people throughout what is now the United States.

### How Can I Teach This?

Investigate the stereotypes and beliefs Europeans held that justified slavery, including the idea that skin color, religious beliefs, climate and different styles of dress were evidence that Indigenous people and Africans were less civilized.

Students can learn about the ways that Europeans came to justify slavery and manipulate enslaved people with new tactics over time, including the use of religion, even censoring the Bibles distributed to convert enslaved people and arguing that blackness was a curse from God.

Get beyond "black" and "white" when talking about race and move toward discussions about its social construction. Examine some of the many important figures in early United States history who were multiracial and were very aware of their own diverse backgrounds. Revolutionary-era figures Crispus Attucks and Paul Cuffee both had African and Indigenous ancestry and identified with both parts of their ancestry.

Starting with an examination of the basic principles of the modern scientific method, students should learn about fake scientific theories that invented "races" based on superficial differences such as the size of heads and ears and shades of skin color. These discussions should include more contemporary examples of fake science.

Students should learn about modern science showing the unified nature of human heritage and our common descent from Africans. After considering this, students should ask why people continue to believe in the idea of race and examine how race and racism continue to shape society.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 15: IN EVERY PLACE AND TIME, ENSLAVED PEOPLE SOUGHT FREEDOM.**

**What Else Should My Students Know?**

**15.A** Everyday acts of resistance—such as working slowly, breaking tools, feigning illness, feigning ignorance to avoid work and running away for short periods—were common.

**15.B** Some enslaved people tried to rebel, but these actions were difficult and mostly unsuccessful because people in power wanted slavery to continue and had many more resources (including weapons) to put down rebellions.

**15.C** Learning how to read and write European languages were acts of rebellion and resistance.

**15.D** Enslaved people resisted attempts to strip away their humanity. They found ways to form families and maintain cultural traditions.

**15.E** Escape was difficult and rare, but some people managed to flee. Enslaved people who escaped were known as “fugitive slaves,” and people chased after them, since there was often a cash reward for returning enslaved people who ran away.

**15.F** Enslaved people pursued freedom in many ways other than escape, including saving money to buy their freedom and their relatives’ freedom, and turning to the courts to seek freedom.

**How Can I Teach This?**

Students will be inspired by stories of escape from slavery, but teachers should be careful to emphasize how rare successful escape really was. There are many excellent trade books about escapes and the Underground Railroad, including *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*, *January’s Sparrow*, *The Brave Escape of Ellen and William Craft*, and *Jump Ship to Freedom*. Books such as *Fort Mose: And the Story of the Man Who Built the First Free Black Settlement in Colonial America* will show students that escape often required a community of people working together.

Rebellions were rare but important. Students should know that enslavers were scared of revolts. As a result, they tried to restrict communication—including widespread bans on drumming among enslaved Africans. Trade books such as *Rebels Against Slavery: American Slave Revolts* will add detail and context.

Many wars with Indigenous people had slavery at their root—either because the participants wanted Indigenous captives to sell, or because Indigenous people were pushing back against slavery. This includes King Philip’s War, Bacon’s Rebellion and the Yamasee War. In the West, the Pueblo Revolt was a rare example of a successful rebellion against conditions that included slavery. Include these events in discussions about European colonies.



Enslaved Africans also tried to rebel. Students should examine historical figures such as Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vesey to learn more about their efforts. The book *Nat Turner’s Slave Rebellion* is a good place to start.

Explore the many ways that enslavers tried to recapture people who escaped from slavery. There are many archives of “runaway slave” ads, including the archive at the North Carolina Runaway Slave Advertisements Project. Although many of these advertisements may be above students’ reading levels due to the use of archaic language, teachers can help

IMAGE WAS FOUND ON ENCYCLOPEDIA VIRGINIA. THE PRINT IS IN THE BETTMAN ARCHIVE. [1] THE IMAGE HAS BEEN PRINTED ON P. 321 OF 1892'S A POPULAR HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES [2] AND P. 154 OF 1894'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES FROM THE EARLIEST DISCOVERY OF AMERICA TO THE PRESENT DAY.



students to decipher them. These advertisements also contain details that will help students to see enslaved people as unique individuals.

[t-t.site/slavery12k5](http://t-t.site/slavery12k5)

Explain that laws often protected enslavers and prevented successful escape. Students can learn about the Fugitive Slave Acts (which the earliest treaties with Native nations often addressed, too) and the idea that it was legal to hunt down people who had escaped slavery, even in places where slavery was illegal.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 16: ENSLAVED PEOPLE WORKED TO PRESERVE THEIR HOME CULTURES WHILE CREATING NEW TRADITIONS.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**16.A** Native nations continue to develop and thrive, and Indigenous people have had a profound and enduring impact across what is now the United States.

**16.B** The combination of African and Indigenous foods and ways of cooking with Indigenous foods continue to greatly influence cuisine in what is now the United States.

**16.C** Enslaved Africans created two of America's most enduring musical forms: spirituals and blues music.

### How Can I Teach This?

When teaching about Indigenous cultures, take care to show their vitality in the present day. Encourage students to explore the diversity of Native nations using the wealth of resources available from the National Museum of the American Indian. [t-t.site/slavery13k5](http://t-t.site/slavery13k5)

Teach students about the roots of gumbo, a dish that combines Indigenous, African and European elements. One traditional component of this dish is an Indigenous ingredient called filé, a powder made from sassafras leaves. Our term “gumbo” derives from a West African word for okra, which is another essential ingredient. The French, the first colonists in

Louisiana, contributed flour, which is used for gumbo's dark roux. Gumbo demonstrates how diverse cultures met in America.

To learn about the musical variety in spirituals, ask students to compare slower songs such as “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” with quicker songs such as “Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham.” Playing contemporary versions of these songs will help students to understand their enduring importance and beauty.

Listen to songs like “Wade in the Water,” “Steal Away” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” encouraging students to examine the lyrics and consider how enslaved people might have interpreted them. “Wade in the Water,” for example, offered instructions for people trying to escape bondage, while “Steal Away” was a call for enslaved people to gather covertly.

Music from contemporary Indigenous artists can help students reflect on the combined legacy of genocide and enslavement for Indigenous people (see, for example, Ulali's song “All My Relations”).

Exploring the importance of the spoken word in the culture of enslaved people, combined with the percussive traditions of much Indigenous and African music, can lead to a discussion of contemporary hip-hop music and its deep roots.

Emphasize that although enslaved people had diverse experiences, they shared common interests in preserving families and traditions. Books such as *Love Twelve Miles Long* and *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters* communicate this clearly.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 17: STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS FOUNDED ON PROTECTING THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF WHITE, CHRISTIAN MEN WHO OWNED PROPERTY. IN THE PROCESS, IT PROTECTED THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**17.A** Twelve presidents, including the author of the Declaration of Independence, and the “Father of the Constitution,” enslaved people.

**17.B** Slavery was politically, socially and economically central to the founding of the United States of America.

**17.C** The Constitution provided many protections for slavery.

**17.D** Many enslaved people were inspired by the idea of freedom and fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War. Some were forced to fight. Others chose to fight, hoping that they would be freed afterward.

### How Can I Teach This?

Students should learn that many thousands of Africans, both freed and those who escaped from slavery, fought in the Revolutionary War on both sides because they hoped for freedom. Students can also learn about the Rhode Island “Black Regiment,” made up of people of color, including Indigenous people, who received their freedom in exchange for fighting in the Revolution.

Students can research the active roles that many historical figures in U.S. history played in maintaining slavery. Many historic homes of presidents provide resources to learn about their communities of enslaved people, including Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, James Madison’s Montpelier and George Washington’s Mount Vernon. [t-t.site/slavery14k5](#) • [t-t.site/slavery15k5](#) • [t-t.site/slavery16k5](#)

Reading *Never Caught: The Story of Ona Judge* and the story “Hercules’ Daughter” will humanize the people whom George Washington enslaved. [t-t.site/slavery17k5](#)

Learning more about how large estates like Montpelier were dependent on enslaved labor will help students to understand that the “founding fathers” were able to spend time thinking and writing because they did not have to work on the farm. Students should learn that their exploitation of others allowed them to accrue wealth and build political status, enabling them to become the “founding fathers.” Slavery didn’t just free these men and women to engage in other activities; plantation management and productivity of slaves (through punishment and coercion and

industrialization of the labor of enslaved people) were major considerations, values and preoccupations for them.

Students should know the circumstances around the Constitution’s creation, including the conflicts surrounding its wording. They need to know that the Constitution was a compromise which had to satisfy enslavers or else it would not be accepted. They should learn about the ways that the Constitution protected slavery, including the Three-Fifths Compromise, the Fugitive Slave Clause and the agreement not to interfere with the international slave trade for 20 years.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 18: WHILE SOME STATES ABOLISHED SLAVERY AFTER INDEPENDENCE, IT REMAINED LEGAL IN MOST OF WHAT IS NOW THE UNITED STATES, EXPANDING INTO SOME NEW STATES AND ACROSS THE SOUTH.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**18.A** Indigenous slavery was mostly eliminated in the East after the Yamasee War. In the West, slavery continued in Spanish colonies and in many newly acquired western territories even after Spain abolished slavery in its colonies.

**18.B** Abolitionists, including many who were formerly enslaved, were successful in making slavery illegal in the Northeastern states.

**18.C** Congress abolished the international slave trade in 1808, but enslavers then moved to trade people inside of the United States in large numbers.

**18.D** The cotton gin transformed the United States economy. White people developed the “Cotton Kingdom” in the Southeast with the forced labor of millions of enslaved Africans.

**18.E** As white people expanded plantation-based slavery throughout the Southeast, they increasingly demanded Indigenous land. The desire for cotton-rich lands led many white people to support the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The federal

government used this act to forcibly remove Indigenous people from the Southeast.

**18.F** Cotton plantations were tied to the entire country. They produced cotton for Northern industry and bought food, clothing, tools and other goods from the entire country.

### How Can I Teach This?

Trade books like *Frederick Douglass and the North Star* and *A Free Woman on God's Earth: The True Story of Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, the Slave Who Won Her Freedom* show how important people of African descent were in the move to abolish slavery.

Examine the role of white allies in the abolition movement, including William Lloyd Garrison and the Grimké sisters. Students can examine the nameplate of *The Liberator* to see how abolitionists depicted the evils of slavery.

[t-t.site/slavery18k5](http://t-t.site/slavery18k5)

Students should examine a pre-Civil War map to identify states that abolished slavery and states where it remained legal. A map showing the boundaries of the "Cotton Kingdom" is a good accompaniment. [t-t.site/slavery20k5](http://t-t.site/slavery20k5) •

[t-t.site/slavery19k5](http://t-t.site/slavery19k5)

Rebecca Onion and historian Claudio Saunt have made an interactive map that will help students to understand the expanse of territory that white settlers took from Native nations. Students should connect how racism (in this case, the idea that Indigenous people were not using the land "appropriately") and capitalism (in this case, white people's desire for increased lands for use and profit) contributed to the forced displacement of Indigenous people. [t-t.site/slavery21k5](http://t-t.site/slavery21k5)

Students can read Tim Tingle's books *How I Became a Ghost* and *When a Ghost Talks, Listen* to understand the experiences of Choctaw people in the days leading up to Removal and during the Trail of Tears.

Students should examine the ways that people in free states indirectly benefited from enslaved labor by considering how the economies of Northeastern and Southeastern states diverged but remained intertwined.



For example, students might examine how textile production relied on cotton grown by enslaved people in the Southeast. They should also discuss slavery when learning about westward expansion.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 19: STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT NATIONAL DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT SLAVERY BECAME SO STRONG THAT 11 STATES SECEDED FROM THE UNITED STATES TO FORM THEIR OWN COUNTRY, LEADING TO THE CIVIL WAR.**

### What Else Should My Students Know?

**19.A** As the United States continued to dispossess Native nations of their lands throughout the West, the states where slavery was legal



pressed for expanding slavery in new U.S. territories so that they would have the same decision-making power in the Senate.

**19.B** Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party thought that slavery should not expand into the new U.S. territories, but many states disagreed.

**19.C** Just as states had the option to join the United States of America, they believed that they could leave through secession. Others believed that the Union was indivisible.

**19.D** After Lincoln was elected president, 11 states seceded from the United States because they feared that the federal government would

end the expansion of slavery. They formed a new government called the Confederate States of America, and the two sides went to war.

**19.E** Many African Americans fought for the Union Army. Native nations fought on both sides of the war or did not participate.

**19.F** After the Union won the Civil War, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery. This abolition often did not reach Indigenous people who were enslaved.

### How Can I Teach This?

Episode 17 of the podcast *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery* offers strategies for teachers to dispel the common myth that Lincoln opposed all slavery. [t-t.site/slavery22k5](https://t-t.site/slavery22k5)

To understand that abolitionists pursued different strategies, students can learn about John Brown by reading *John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry*.

Students should learn about the roles that Indigenous people played in the Civil War, including learning the story of General Ely Samuel Parker. They should examine the war's impact on Native nations. [t-t.site/slavery23k5](https://t-t.site/slavery23k5)

Students should look at a map of the Confederate states to understand the basic geography of the warring parties. [t-t.site/slavery24k5](https://t-t.site/slavery24k5)

Compare images of Confederate currency with images of United States currency from the same time period. Students can identify the symbols used on each and discuss the messages that these artifacts communicate. To consider the contemporary use of these images, students should learn about the history of what is often called the "Confederate flag" and current controversies over its display.

Read the 13th Amendment. After asking students whether it abolishes slavery in all circumstances, ask them to predict how enslavers might continue to exploit enslaved labor after its passage.

**ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE 20: STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, FORMERLY ENSLAVED PEOPLE FACED MANY OBSTACLES, INCLUDING RACISM AND POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY. THEIR DESCENDANTS CONTINUE TO FACE SIMILAR OPPRESSION TODAY, THOUGH IT LOOKS DIFFERENT NOW THAN IT DID THEN.**

### **What Else Should My Students Know?**

**20.A** After the war, formerly enslaved Africans responded to freedom in different ways. Most tried to reunite with their families. Some set up new institutions, including schools, while participating in politics by voting and serving in government if they were able.

**20.B** Although formerly enslaved Africans were promised land and resources to set up their own farms, most did not receive these from the federal government. Some who did receive land and resources later had them taken away. Newly freed people had to figure out how to make a living and support their families.

**20.C** For about 10 years after the Civil War, the federal government provided services to the formerly enslaved and took steps designed to protect their political and civil rights, but these advances were later overturned.

**20.D** Provisions that granted rights to formerly enslaved Africans, such as the 13th Amendment, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th Amendment, did not protect Indigenous people from enslavement. After the Civil War, the United States continued to war against Native nations to steal their land. The federal government also developed a series of schools to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into white culture.

### **How Can I Teach This?**

Students should learn about Juneteenth and its continuing celebration today.

Read trade books that discuss the experience of African Americans after the Civil War, such as *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl*. Books such as *Heart*

*and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans* preview the ongoing struggles that African Americans faced after the war.

Previewing Reconstruction and its failure, students should consider the ways that the resistance and racism of the defeated Confederates persisted after the war, as former enslavers worked to bring back their cheap labor and subservient population. Looking at California, students can examine the ways that forced Indigenous servitude continued after the Civil War.

Reading the 13th Amendment with students creates an opportunity to discuss its provision for the treatment of prisoners, opening up subsequent conversations about the continued enslavement of Indigenous people and the growth of the convict labor system.

Students should learn about schools and universities, including historically black colleges and universities, that were created after the Civil War. Researching their legacies and traditions will give students a chance to appreciate the importance of these institutions in African American life. Though Tribal colleges and universities were created much later, students can also learn about their importance for Indigenous people today.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Teaching Hard History: A K–5 Framework for Teaching American Slavery* was written by Kate Shuster, Hasan Jefferies, Meredith L. McCoy, Margaret Newell, Sarah B. Shear, Christina Snyder and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas. The framework was designed by Russell Estes and Shannon Anderson. Maureen Costello advised the content development process. Monita Bell and Julia Delacroix provided editorial support. Special thanks to all the members of the Teaching Hard History advisory board for contributing their time and talents to this project.

Special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press and to all the scholars who contributed to the book *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Your work provided the foundation upon which this project was built.

*Cover and section illustrations by TAYLOR CALLERY*

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Shuster, Kate, Hasan K. Jefferies, Meredith L. McCoy, Margaret Newell, Sarah B. Shear, Christina Snyder and Ebony E. Thomas. *Teaching Hard History: A K–5 Framework for Teaching American Slavery*. Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019.





# TEACHING TOLERANCE

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