Voices from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Overview
In this lesson, students will gain an understanding of the history of the African slave trade, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the development of slavery in America through discussing historical facts, art work, and excerpts from the book Copper Sun. Students will focus on the humanization of those enslaved by completing a project in which they assume the persona of an African forced into slavery and recreate a personal journal kept by the enslaved.

Grades
7-8

North Carolina Essential Standards for 7th Grade
- 7.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues over time.
- 7.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 7.H.2.1 - Analyze the effects of social, economic, military and political conflict among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. war, genocide, imperialism and colonization).
- 7.C.1.1 - Explain how culture unites and divides modern societies and regions (e.g. enslavement of various peoples, caste system, religious conflict and Social Darwinism).

North Carolina Essential Standards for 8th grade
- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues.
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.2.1 - Explain the impact of economic, political, social, and military conflicts (e.g. war, slavery, states’ rights and citizenship and immigration policies) on the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.1 - Explain how migration and immigration contributed to the development of North Carolina and the United States from colonization to contemporary times (e.g. westward movement, African slavery, Trail of Tears, the Great Migration and Ellis and Angel Island)
- 8.C.1.1 - Explain how influences from Africa, Europe, and the Americas impacted North Carolina and the United States (e.g. Columbian exchange, slavery and the decline of the American Indian populations).
- 8.C.1.3 - Summarize the contributions of particular groups to the development of North Carolina and the United States (e.g. women, religious groups, and ethnic minorities such as American Indians, African Americans, and European immigrants).

Essential Questions
- What was life like for the individual human beings before they were forced into slavery?
- When and why did African slavery begin?
- What were the causes and effects of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade?
- What was the Triangle Trade Route and how did it affect the continents involved?
- What was the experience of enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage?
- What were the experiences of individuals who were enslaved? What was the effect of enslavement on their livelihood and culture?
- How did slavery develop in the southern colonies, particularly in North and South Carolina?
- In what ways did slavery impact the foundations of America?
Materials

- Voices of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Power Point, available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)
  - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
  - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- Copper Sun, a novel by Sharon Draper (either one copy for reading aloud, or multiple copies for students to read individually or in partners)
- Heart shapes for cutting and distributing to students, attached
- Journals from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Assignment Sheet, attached

Duration

60-90 minutes (depends upon amount of student discussion; time can be split over two class periods)

Procedure

Day 1

The Humanness of those Enslaved

1. As a warm up to this lesson, give each student a cut out shape of a heart (attached). Tell students that they are going to read the first pages of a book called Copper Sun, in which they will be introduced to a young, 15-year-old Ashanti girl named Amari. If multiple copies of the book are available, tell students to read page 1-11, stopping at “And as Kwasi stomped and glided through the dust that evening, it seemed to Amari that he really was flying.” (It is important to stress to students to not read beyond this point until told to do so.) If multiple books are not available, teachers should read this section out loud to the class.

2. Tell students that after they have read the section and met Amari, they should use what they have read and additional creative inferences that they deduce to decorate the heart shape so that it represents her personality, her life, her hopes and dreams, etc. Students should use adjectives that describe Amari and her experiences, phrases that note what is important to Amari, artistic pictures and symbols that illustrate Amari and what her life is like, etc.

3. Once students have finished reading and decorating their heart shape, further discuss:
   - What is your first impression of Amari? What types of adjectives, words, phrases, pictures, etc. did you use to describe her on your heart?
   - Describe Amari’s relationship with her little brother Kwasi. How can you relate?
   - How do you think Amari envisions the future of her relationship with Besa?
   - Visualize Amari’s village. What do you see? Smell? Hear?
   - What do you think is important to Amari? What does she value?
   - What roll do you think women in this society play?
   - Interpret the quote on pg. 5: “We must welcome our guests then Amari. We would never judge people based on how they looked—that would be uncivilized.”
   - Predict what will happen next, following page 11.

4. Tell students that you are going to read the next pages of the book to them. Instruct students to keep their decorated hearts in hand and to listen for any moment when Amari experiences something painful (emotionally or physically) throughout the next chapter. Tell students to tear a piece of their paper heart off at every such moment. (Teachers should begin reading at the top of page 12 and read through the end of chapter 3, page 20.) Once finished, many students will have nothing but a pile of pieces in front of them. Discuss:
   - What painful circumstances did Amari experience? At this point in the book, what has become of all the dreams and hopes she held in her heart?
5. Explain to students that it is important to focus on the individuality and humanness of Africans who were enslaved. Often, when considering slaves, we strip them of any identity beyond this forced role. Explain to students that it is important to remember that the thousands of Africans who were enslaved were individuals, such as the case with Amari, with day-to-day lives, hopes, dreams, fears, intelligences, etc., just like us. The pieces of what was once Amari’s full heart represents the experience of thousands of individual lives that were captured and forced into slavery.

Students will likely be anxious to find out what happens to Amari. Allow them to predict what will happen next, then explain that they are going to learn more about slavery in general before learning Amari’s fate.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

6. Project the image found on slide 2 of the Voices of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Power Point and ask students to brainstorm and discuss the following:
   - What do you see in this picture?
   - What do you think the shading represents?
   - What is the story behind this drawing? (Imagine what happened right before this, what is happening now, and what you predict will happen next?)
   - What do you think the artist was trying to convey in this drawing?
   - What do you already know about slavery? (Write responses on the board.)

7. Explain to students that the remainder of class will be spent discussing the history of the African slave trade and the development of slavery in America.

8. It is important that the Power Point be used as a catalyst for class discussion and not lecture. Some suggested discussion points are located below. As you facilitate discussion, you may wish to instruct students to take notes in Cornell Note format, or another preferred way. Teachers should amend and edit the Power Point as they deem necessary - to request an editable PPT version of the presentation, e-mail CarolinaK12@unc.edu. During discussion, allow students to express opinions and state their understanding of facts. However, the teacher should respectfully dispel any incorrect or stereotypical information that is discussed.
   - **Slide 3:**
     - What do you think the word “Trans-Saharan” refers to and why?
   - **Slide 8:**
     - Based on this map, what do you think the Triangle Trade Route was?
     - How do you think each continent was impacted by this trade?
     - We know that enslaved Africans were brought to the colonies once they began to form along the East Coast of North America. What impact do you think those enslaved had on the colonies?
   - **Slide 9:**
     - What does “Middle Passage” refer to? What do you already know about the Middle Passage?
     - Ensure students have a proper understanding of what the term refers to, such as “the trip enslaved Africans were forced to take across the Atlantic Ocean; the trip would take months, and much of this time was spent chained in the bowels of a slave ship.”
     - What do you see in this picture, and how does it illustrate the Middle Passage?
   - **Slide 10:**
     - What do you imagine life in aboard a slave ship for those enslaved would have been like?
9. Tell students that it is time to check back in with Amari. Chapter 7 in *Copper Sun* deals with the beginning of Amari’s trip on the Middle Passage. For the purposes of this lesson, it is recommended to skip ahead to this point. Explain to students that at this point in the story, Amari has been marched to the shore and placed on a slave ship along with hundreds of other captives, though she is not aware of where she is, where she is going, where Besa is, or why this is all happening. Read the chapter out loud and discuss:
   - In your opinion, what is the worst part of what Amari has had to deal with thus far?
   - What did you visualize as I read this chapter to you?
   - Interpret the line, “The ship of death was surprisingly very much alive.”
   - What do you think Amari is thinking at this point in the story? What do you think will happen to her?

10. Continue on with the Power Point, sharing the information on slides 11-14. On slide 15, encourage students to imagine and visualize all aspects of the months spent on a slave ship by both those enslaved and those in control. Make sure they consider all senses, and respond with what they think they would see, hear, smell, feel, etc. Further discuss:
   - Compare and contrast this drawing with the one we viewed at the beginning of this Power Point.
   - What do you see here?
   - What is the story behind this drawing as compared to the other?
   - What do you think the artist was trying to convey in this drawing?
   - Although people who were enslaved experienced terrible things, they often still attempted to rebel against the cruelty and oppression, both outwardly and inwardly.
     - Extension: Teachers may wish to discuss various slave ship rebellions at this point, such as the *Amistad*.

   **Exploring the Voices of the Individuals**

11. Once you arrive at slide 16 of the Power Point, remind students that Africans who were sold into the slave trade had identities beyond being “a slave.” They were people living their lives and performing day-to-day activities. These people were individuals with skills, hopes, dreams, and feelings. They had identities beyond the world they were forced into once captured.

12. Tell students that they will assume the role of an African and create a personal journal that details the African’s life both before and after being sold into slavery. Hand out the “Create an African Journal Assignment” (attached), and go through the remaining slides to explain the project. Students should be realistic and creative in their development of this person and their writing, but teachers may wish to give specific direction as to the level of description expected in the journals. (Students sometime portray very graphic realities of slave life in their journals and teachers should let them know up front what is acceptable to write as part of this assignment and what is not.) Also encourage students to be creative in the artistic design of the journal.

   The teacher should determine how much time to permit for completing the project, as well as how much time will be provided in class for research and/or brainstorming. Close class by helping students begin brainstorming ideas and addressing questions.

   **Culminating Activities**
   - Have students present their journals to the class by describing the African person they imagined and also choosing a few of their favorite entries to read aloud.
   - Use *Copper Sun* as a supplemental classroom novel. Complete activities off the *Copper Sun* website: [http://sharondraper.com/copper-resources.asp](http://sharondraper.com/copper-resources.asp) (source link not working)

   **Differentiation**
**Students with special needs**

- Provide students with a copy of the Power Point.
- Allow students to work with a reading partner if *Copper Sun* is read individually.
- Modify the journal project by requiring a limited number of entries; some students may also benefit from narrowed choices, thus the teacher might consider assigning the African region, time period, and African name for the journal project.

**AIG Students**

- If the entire class does not use *Copper Sun* as a supplemental reading, have AIG students read it and make a presentation about the book to class. Presentations could include dramatic scene reenactments, summaries, a Power Point, etc. Allowing students to choose a way to present the book to class will give them ownership of the project.
- Have students do further research on particular slave rebellions in the south (i.e. Stono Rebellion, Gabriel in Virginia in 1800, Denmark Vesey in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822, Nat Turner at Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831, etc.)
Africans who were sold into the slave trade had identities beyond being “a slave.” They were people living their lives, surviving as human beings, and performing day-to-day activities. These people were individuals with skills, hopes, dreams, and feelings. They had identities beyond the world they were forced into once captured.

**Assignment:**

Students will assume the role of an African and create a personal journal that details their life both before and after being sold into slavery.

**Due Date:**

**Steps for Completion:**

1. Brainstorm.

2. Choose a region of Africa and a particular time period to research. In your research, focus on finding out information that will help you infer your character’s day-to-day life. For example, you may want to find out information about:
   - Environment
   - Jobs and daily habits
   - Culture
   - Traditions
   - Religion
   - Food

3. Choose an African name and begin to imagine this person’s life. Examples include:

   **Women:**
   - Adanna
   - Adetokumbo (ah-Deh-toh-koom-boh)
   - Adebumi (Ah-day-boo-me)
   - Adowa
   - Aina (eye-nah)
   - Dacia
   - Dericia
   - Tanginika (Tann-J-Nee-ka)
   - Takiyah
   - Tatu
   - Obax (OH-bah)
   - Obioma (O-be-o-ma)

   **Men:**
   - Babu
   - Banga
   - Faraji
   - Fela
   - Abimbola
   - Adisa
   - Besa
   - Adofo
   - Kantigi
   - Kashka
   - Zahur
   - Barrak

4. As you brainstorm, begin to create your journal entries. Your journal should contain beginning, middle, and closing entries.

   a) Your **beginning entries** should be set in your African home. In your beginning entries, consider:
• Who are you?
• Describe where you live.
• What do you do each day?
• Who is around you? Who do you spend your time with?
• What do you enjoy?
• What are your hopes and dreams?
• What are your skills?
• What do you dislike?

b) **Middle entries** should take place after you have been captured. Write about the voyage across the Middle Passage and your arrival in the Americas.

• Where are you while writing each entry (on a boat, in a cell/stockade, at a sale, etc.)?
• How were you captured? Who captured you? What were you doing before you were captured? What was your life like before being captured?
• What is happening around you?
• What do you see? Smell? Hear? Feel? Hope? Fear? Wish?
• How are you handling this situation?
• How are others around you handling this situation?
• What do you think is going to happen?
• How are you managing to survive?

c) **Final entries** should conclude your experiences.

• What have you discovered about yourself?
• What are your reflections regarding this experience thus far?
• What happens to you? (Does your journal have an ending entry, does the writing simply drop of the page and we never know, etc.?)

5. Be creative in how you artistically design your journal. How did the experience of your journal’s African owner affect the design and type of the journal? Was it bought or homemade? Does it look aged? Has it suffered damage over the years? What materials would it have been made of and what would have been used to write the entries? Infer and be creative!