Narratives of Enslaved North Carolinians

Overview
In this lesson, students will discuss the lives of enslaved Africans and African Americans in the United States during the early to mid 1800s. After researching the lives of some of people who were enslaved in North Carolina through several primary sources, students will assume the persona of an enslaved person and write a series of diary entries based on learned facts.

Grade
8

North Carolina Essential Standards for 8th Grade Social Studies
• 8.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues.
• 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
• 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
• 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).
• 8.C&G.1.4 - Analyze access to democratic rights and freedoms among various groups in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. enslaved people, women, wage earners, landless farmers, American Indians, African Americans and other ethnic groups).

Essential Questions
• What was life like for an enslaved person living in North Carolina?
• What was the role of an enslaved person during the pre-Civil War era?
• What were some prevailing attitudes of those enslaved regarding their situation before and after emancipation?

Materials
• Pictures of enslaved people, examples attached
• Narrative Note Sheet, attached
• Narratives of ex-slaves
  o Four samples are attached; additional narratives are available at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html.
  o It is recommended that each narrative be copied on a different color of paper if possible; since it is recommended students read more than just one narrative, this will make trading among students easier

Duration
60 minutes

Preparation
While the study of slavery can be a sensitive and difficult topic for students to study, it is important for students to explore such events in depth. In order to study this history effectively and safely however, teachers must have established a safe classroom with clear expectations of respect, open-mindedness, and civil conversation. See the Consortium’s “Activities” section of the Database of Civic Resources for ways to ensure a classroom environment conducive to the effective exploration of controversial, difficult, and sensitive issues.

Procedure

1. **Slavery in the United States**
   - Before class, create a “KWL Chart” by dividing a sheet of chart paper into 3 sections (this can also be done on a chalkboard). Head the three columns “Know,” “Want to Know,” and “Learned.”

2. Give each student 5 Post-It Notes as they arrive. As a warm-up, ask students to think about what they know about the culture and living conditions of people who were enslaved in the US prior to the Civil War. Ask them to write 3-4 things they know about the topic, each on a separate Post-It Note. Using the remaining Post-It Notes, ask students to write 1-2 questions they have about slave culture (i.e. what do they want to know?) As students fill out Post-It Notes, ask them to place them on the chart in the appropriate column. When all students are finished, discuss some or all of the “Knows.” Ask students where they learned these things. Respectfully correct any inaccuracies or misconceptions. Then discuss the “Want to knows” that students placed on poster board. Ask students to identify sources where they might find answers to these questions. Tell them that the words of enslaved people themselves, or “primary sources,” are one of the best resources for answering the questions about culture.

3. **Images of Slavery**
   - Ask students to take out a sheet of paper and number from 1 to 5, leaving room for a few sentences between each number. Explain that you are going to present 5 images of people who were enslaved, each image for 2 minutes (examples are attached). (Alternatively, images can also be printed and handed out.) Explain to students that they are to silently write a brief description of what they see, their reactions, and a one word summary of each image. While students should not necessarily censor themselves in their responses, remind them of the importance of being respectful and sensitive of this history. After you have presented all images, go back through them and allow students to share their reactions. Ask follow-up questions as needed and correct any inaccuracies or misunderstandings in students responses if they surface.

4. **The Personal Stories of Those Enslaved**
   - Keeping the images in mind, tell students they are about to read narratives that were written by people who were actually enslaved in North Carolina. Explain to students that the first-person accounts they will read exist because they were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and were assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*. These transcribed interviews are invaluable in allowing us to gain insight into the experience of those who lived during slavery. Distribute the attached “Slave Narrative Notes” and explain that for each narrative they read, they will have to answer a few brief questions.

5. At this point, it is extremely important to discuss some aspects of the narratives that students may be unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable with:
   - The narratives are written in the **vernacular** of the time.
   - **Phonetic spellings** are used (words are spelled the way they sound).
   - The narratives often contain racial slurs.
     - Teachers should prepare students for encountering such words rather than just assuming students will understand the history. Having an established classroom culture of safety, tolerance, and respect is key. The following PBS link offers some approaches teachers can take to
6. Pass out one of the attached four narratives to each student (or one narrative to each set of partners if working in partners). It is recommended that students read 2-3 different narratives, so teachers may want to copy each of the four narratives on different colored paper to make switching simpler. Tell students that they will have around 20 minutes to read 2-3 of the narratives and record their responses on the “Narrative Notes” sheet. (After the first 8-10 minutes, teachers may want to remind students to trade stories and repeat the task.) After most students have read at least two narratives, allow students to share their reactions to the narratives. You may want to ask some of the following questions:

- How did reading the first-hand accounts of people who were enslaved make you feel?
- What types of experiences were noted in the narratives?
- Did you find anything particularly surprising or disturbing? Explain.
- How would you describe the attitudes of these people?
- What can you tell about slave culture based on what you read?
- Why is it important to study slavery today, and to learn about the experiences of those who were enslaved?

**Considering the Life of Those Enslaved - Writing Diary Entries**

7. To segue into the next activity, discuss various things that people write about in diaries: events, emotions and feelings, thoughts, questions, goals, dreams, plans, etc. Remind students that diaries are personal accounts. As such, personalities of authors are very evident in their writing.

8. Tell students they will be writing 2 diary entries from the perspective of a person currently enslaved. In their journal entries they should address the following questions:

- What is your name?
- What kind of household do you work for? (i.e. plantation, small home, etc.)
- What kind of person or family owns you? What is your relationship with them like?
- What kind of work are you expected to perform?
- What are your living conditions like? Who do you live with?
- What are some things in life that are most important to you? Why?
- What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations beyond enslavement?

Teacher note: Teachers should determine whether or not to instruct students to write using the vernacular of the time. If so, ensure students understand how to be mature, respectful and appropriate in their writing.

9. After students complete their diary entries (which can be required for homework), place students into small groups and have each of them share an entry they wrote. Again, set presentation standards and remind students to be respectful and appropriate.

10. As a closing activity, refer back to the “KWL Chart” this lesson started with. Distribute one or two Post It notes to each student and ask them to write down anything they may have learned throughout the lesson, writing their diary entries, or listening to others. Have students place Post It notes under the appropriate column on the chart. Discuss some of the things students learned. Check to see if the questions from the “W” column were answered. If not, address questions and discuss possible answers.

**Additional Activities**

- Have students read and discuss excerpts from *Memories of a Childhood Slave* by Annie L. Burton, which can be found at [http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/burton/burton.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/burton/burton.html).

**Resources**

- [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/section1_2.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/section1_2.html)
• This lesson plan was adapted from http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_lp_slavediary.htm (this source link does not seem to work)
Slave Images

http://img219.imageshack.us/img219/1668/slave1am8.jpg

http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/photographs/slaves.htm
Name: __________________________

Slave Story Notes

1) What can you tell about the author based on their story? How would you describe the author?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

2) Describe an event or situation the author wrote about. How did it make the author feel? How did the author react?

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_______________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

3) As far as you can tell, how did the author feel about his/her experience as a slave?

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_______________________________________________________________________________________________
Abner Jordan
Ex-slave, 85 years.

"I was born about 1832 an' I was born at Staggsville, Marse Paul Cameron's place. I belonged to Marse Paul. My pappy's name was Obed an' my mammy was Ella Jordan an' dey was thirteen chillum on our family.

I was de same age of Young Marse Beneziah, I played wid him an' wus his body guard. Yes, suh, Where ever young Marse Beneziah went I went too.

I waited on him. Young Marse Benny run away an' listed in de war, but Marse Paul done went an' brung him back kaze he wus too young to go and fight de Yankees.

Marse Paul had a heap if niggahs; he had five thousand. When he meet dem in de road he wouldn' know dem an' when he axed dem who dey wus an' who dey belonged to, dey tell him dey belonged to Marse Paul Cameron an' den he would say dat wus all right for dem to gâ right on.

By pappy wus de blacksmith an' foreman for Marse Paul, an' he blew de horn for de other niggahs to come in from de fiel' at night. Dey couldn' leave de plantation without Marse say dey could.

When de war come de Yankees come to de house an' axed my mammy whare de folks done hid de silver an' gol', an' dey say dey gwine to kill mammy if she didn' tell dem. But mammy say she didn' know whare dey put it, an' dey would jus' have to kill her for she didn' know an' wouldn' lie to keep dem from hurting her.
De sojers stole seven or eight of de ho'ses an' four or meat an' stole dat, but dey didn' burn none of de buildin's nor hurt any of us slaves.

My pappy an' his family stayed wid Marse Paul five years after de surrender den we moved to Hillsboro an' it's always lived 'roun' dese parts. I ain' never been out of North Carolina eighteen months in my life. North Carolina is good enough for me.
ANN PARKER
Ex-Slave Story

An interview with Am Parker in the Wake County Home, Raleigh, North Carolina.

"I reckon dat I is a hundert an' three or a hundert an' four years old. I wuz a 'oman grown at de end o' de war.

"I ain't had no daddy case queens doan marry an' my mammy, Junny, wuz a queen in Africa. Dey kidnaps her an' steals her 'way from her throne an' fetches her hyar ter Wake County in slavery.

"We 'longed ter Mr. Abner Parker who lived near Raleigh an' he had maybe a hundert slaves an' a whole heap of lan'. I ain't neber laked him much, case we had ter wuck hard an' we ain't got much ter eat. He ain't 'lowed us no fun, but we did have some, spite o' him.

"We uster git by de patterollers an' go ter de neighborin' plantations whar we'd sing an' talk an' maybe dance. I know onct do' dat we wuz in a barn on Mr. Liles' place when de patterollers comed, all dat could git out scated, but de ones dat got ketched got a whuppin'.

"I got seberal whuppin's fer dis, dat an' tother; but
I specks dat I needed 'em. Anyhow we wuz raised right, we warn't 'lowed ter sass nobody an' we ole'uns still knows dat we is got ter be perlite ter yo' white ladies.

"Daughter, did I tell yo' 'bout my mammy bein' a queen. Yes, she wuz a queen, an' when she tol' dem niggers dat she wuz dey bowed down ter her. She tol' dem not ter tell hit an' dey doan tell, but when dey is out of sight of de white folkse dey bows down ter her an' does what she says.

"A few days 'fore de surrender mammy, who am also a witch, says ter dem dat she sees hit in de coffee grounds dat dey am gwine ter be free so all o' us packs up an' gits out.

"We got along pretty good after de war, an' on till lately. Atter I gits too ole ter wuck I sets on de post-office steps an' begs. I got a good pile o' money too, but somebody done stole hit an' now I'se 'way in de County Home.

"I fell an' broke my arm sometime ago, case my right side am daid an' I tries ter crawl offen de bed. When I gits back from de hospital dey ties me in dis cheer ter keep me from fellin' out, but I want ter git a loost. De nigger boy what helps me up an' down ain't raised lak I wuz, he fusses an' he he ain't got de manners what he ort ter habe."

L. E.
BILL CRUMP
Ex-Slave Story

An interview with Bill Crump, 82 of State prison, Raleigh North Carolina.

"I reckon dat I was borned in Davidson County on de plantation of Mr. Whitman Smith, my mammy's marster.

"My daddy was named Tom an' he 'longed ter Mr. Ben Murry fust an' later ter Mr. Jimmy Crump. Daddy was named after his young marster. Dey lived in Randolph, de county next ter Davidson whar me mammy an' de rest of de chilluns, Alt, George, Harriet, Sarah, Mary an' de baby libed.

"Both of de marsters was good ter us, an' dar was plenty ter eat an' w'ar, an' right many jubilees. We ain't none of de dozen er so of us eber got a whippin', case we ain't deserved no whippin'; why, dar wasn't eben a cowhide whup anywhar on de place. We wucked in de fie'ls from sunup ter sundown mos' o' de time, but we had a couple of hours at dinner time ter swim or lay on de banks uv de little crick an' sleep. Ober 'bout sundown marster let us go swim ag'in iff en we wanted ter do it.
"De marster let us have some chickens, a shoot an' a gyarden, an' tater patch, an' we had time off ter wuck 'em. In season we preserved our own fruits fer de winter an' so we larned not ter be so heaby on de marster's han's.

"My daddy was a fiddler, an' he sometimes played fer de dances at de Cross Roads, a little village near de marster's place. All what ain't been mean could go, but de mean ones can't, an' de rest o' us has ter habe a pass ter keep de patterollers from gittin us.

"Yes mam, we had our fun at de dances, co'n chuckin's, candy pullin's, an' de gatherin's an' we sarbed de marster better by habin' our fun.

"I'm seed a bunch o' slaves sold a heap of times an' I neber seed no chains on nobody. Dey jist stood dem on de table front of de post office at Cross Roads an' sol' 'em ter de one what bids de highest.'

"We hyard a whisper 'bout some slaves bein' beat ter death, but I ain't neber seed a slave git a lick of no kin', course after de war I seed de Ku Klux runnin' mean niggers.

"Dar was no marryin' on de plantation, iffen a nigger wants a 'oman he has got ter buy her or git her marster's permit, den dey am married.

"When one o' de slaves wus sick he had a doctor fast
as lightnin', an' when de died he wus set up wid one night.
De marster would gibe de mourners a drink o' wine mebbe,
an' dey'd mo'n, an' shout, an' sing a ll de night long, while
de cop'se laid out on de coolin' board, which 'minds me of
a tale.

"Onct we wus settin' up wid a nigger, 'fore de war an'
hit bein' a hot night de wine wus drunk an' de mo'ners wus
settin' front o' de do' eatin' watermillons while de daid
man laid on de coolin' board. Suddenly one of de niggers
looks back in at de do', an' de daid man am settin' up on
de coolin' board lookin' right at him. De man what sees hit
hollers, an' all de rest what has been wishin' dat de daid
man can enjoy de wine an' de watermillons am sorry dat he
has comed back.

"Dey doan take time ter say hit do', case dey am gone
ter de big house. De marster am brave so he comes ter see,
an' he says dat hit am only restrictions o' de muscles.

"De nex' mornin', as am de way, dey puts de man in a
pine box made by 'nother slave an' dey totes him from de
cabin ter de marster's buryin' groun' at de cedars; an' de
slaves bury's him while de marster an' his fambly looks on.

"I doan know much 'bout de Yankees case de warn't none
'cept de skirtin' parties comed our way.

"Atter de war we stays on fer four or five years
The page contains a narrative passage written in English. The text reads:

"Mebbe, an' I goes ter school two weeks. Da teacher wus Mr. Edmund Knights from de No' th.

"I'se sarbed four years an' ten months of a eight ter twelve stretch fer killin' a man. Dis man an' a whole gang o' us wus at his house gamblin'. I had done quit drinkin' er mont' er so 'fore dat, but dey 'sists on hit, but I 'fuses. Atter 'while he pours some on me an': I cusses him, den he cusses me, an' he says dat he am gwine ter kill me, an' he follers me down de road. I turns roun' an' shoots him.

"Dat am all of my story 'cept dat I has seen a power-
ful heap of ghosts an' I knows dat dey comes in white an' black, an' dat dey am in de shape er dogs, mens, an' eber' thing dat you can have a mind to."

L.E.
AUNT BARBARA'S LOVE STORY

An interview with Barbara Haywood, 85 years old. Address 1111 Mark Street, Raleigh, North Carolina.

"Anything dat I tells you will near 'bout all be 'bout Frank Haywood, my husband."

"I was born on de John Walton place seben miles southeast of Raleigh. My father, Handy Sturdivant, belonged to somebody in Johnston County but mother an' her chilluns 'longed ter Marse John Walton.

"Marse John had a corn shuckin' onct an' at dat corn shuckin' I fust saw Frank. I was a little girl, cryin' an' bawlin' an' Frank, who was a big boy said dat he neber wanted ter spank a youngin' so bad, an' I ain't liked him no better dan he did me.

"He 'longed ter Mr. Yarborough, what runned de hotel in Raleigh, but he was boun' out ter anybody what'ud hire him, an' I doan know whar he got his name.

"I seed Frank a few times at de Holland's Methodist Church whar we went ter church wid our white folks.

"You axes iff en our white folks wus good ter us, an' I sez ter yo' dat none of de white folks wus good ter
none of de niggers. We done our weavin' at night an' we
wurked hard. We had enough ter eat but we wus whupped
some.

"Jest 'fore de war wus ober we wus sent ter Mr.
William Turner's place down clost ter Smithfield an' dats
whar we wus when de Yankees come.

"One day I wus settin' on de porch restin' att er
my days wurk wus done when I sees de hoss-lot full of
men an' I sez ter Marse William, who am talkin' ter a
soldier named Cole, 'De lot am full of men.'

"Marse Cole looks up an' he 'lows, 'Hits dem damned
Yankees,' an' wid dat he buckles on his sword an' he ain't
been seen since.

"De Yankees takes all de meat outen de smokehouse
an' goes 'roun' ter de slave cabins an' takes de meat
what de white folkses has put dar. Dat wus de fust hams
dat has eber been in de nigger house. Anyhow de Yankees
takes all de hams, but dey gibes us de shoulders.

"Atter de war we moved ter Raleigh, on Davie Street
an' I went ter school a little at Saint Paul's. Frank
wus wurkin' at de City Market on Fayetteville Street an'
I'd go seberal blocks out of my way mornin' an' night on
my way ter school ter look at him. You see I has been
in love with him fer a long time den.
"Atter awhile Frank becomes a butcher an' he am makin' pretty good. I is thirteen so he comes ter see me an' fer a year we cou' ts. We was settin' in de kitchen at de house on Davie Street when he axes me ter have him an' I has him.

"I knows dat he tol' me dat he warn't worthy but dat he loved me an' dat he'd do anything he could ter please me, an' dat he'd always be good ter me.

"When I was fourteen I got married an' when I was fifteen my oldes' daughter, Eleanor, wus borned. I had three atter her, an' Frank was proud of dem as could be. We was happy. We libed together fifty-four years an' we was always happy, havin' a mighty little bit of argument. I hopes young lady, dat you'll be as lucky as I wus wid Frank."