

SLAVERY BUILT AMERICA: HOW IMPLICATED WAS OUR REGION?



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How did New Jersey participate in and profit from chattel slavery? How did enslaved people and abolitionists resist and ultimately end slavery in New Jersey?



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Investigate a museum exhibit on slavery in New Jersey.
- Identify economic, political, social and geographic factors related to chattel slavery in New Jersey.
- Explain how enslaved people and abolitionists resisted and brought an end to slavery in New Jersey.
- Research abolition in New Jersey, and create a work product reflecting what they have learned.



LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



TIME NEEDED

90–135 minutes



MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project images
- [Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History](#) (one copy per student or online access)
- *Five Dollars Reward* handout (one to project or one per student)
- *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey* handout (one per student)
- *Sold to Go South* handout (one to project)
- *Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition* handout (one per student)
- Laptops or tablets for student research



VOCABULARY

13 th Amendment	Emancipation	import/	resistance
abolition/	Proclamation	importation	servitude
abolitionist	enslaved	manumit/	slave codes
bondage	enslaver	manumission	Underground
chattel slavery	fugitive	plantation	Railroad
		Quaker	

Procedures

NOTES

In this lesson, students examine the exhibit, *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*. The middle school lesson on this topic engages students in a lower level investigation of the same exhibit. See that lesson if some of your students would benefit from it.

When discussing slavery with students, it is suggested the term “enslaved person” be used instead of “slave” to emphasize their humanity; that “enslaver” be used instead of “master” or “owner” to show that slavery was forced upon human beings; and that “freedom seeker” be used instead of “runaway” or “fugitive” to emphasize justice and avoid the connotation of lawbreaking.

PART I

Introducing the *Slavery in New Jersey* Exhibit (20 minutes)

1

Project or distribute the handout *Five Dollars Reward* (from page 3 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit) and have students discuss the following questions in pairs:

- Where and when do you think this ad might have been printed? What clues in the text lead to your conclusions?
- What image do you have of the “negro boy” based on the description?
- What do you think were the “perils” of “harboring” an enslaved person at this time?
- How does it make you feel to read about a human being treated as chattel or property?

2

Reveal that the ad was placed in the *New Jersey Journal* in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, on October 20, 1812. Share that slavery was not legally abolished in New Jersey until the 13th Amendment became law in 1865, and that New Jersey was the last Northern state to ratify the amendment in 1866. Ask students if they are surprised that slavery existed in New Jersey for so long. Discuss why people might not associate the Northern states with slavery.

3 Tell students that the ad was featured in an exhibit called *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*,¹ which was on display at the Durand-Hedden House, a historic house museum in Maplewood, New Jersey. Tell students they will be exploring the exhibit (available in a booklet form) in class. Project the title page of the exhibit: <https://villagegreennj.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/juneteenth-exhibit.pdf>. Together read the author's note on page i and the opening paragraph on page 2.

4 For homework, assign students to read pages 2–10 of the exhibit. Provide them with either a copy of the booklet or the URL if they are able to access it online. Distribute the handout *Notes: Slavery in New Jersey*, and review the instructions with students. Direct them to complete the handout as they read through the exhibit.

PART II

Slavery in New Jersey—Digging Deeper (20 minutes)

5 Have students take out (or access online) their homework and the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit. Seat them in small groups of 4–6 students and assign each group one of the following categories to focus on for this part of the lesson: economic, political, social or geographic.

6 Project the handout *Sold to Go South* (from page 8 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit). In their groups, have students discuss the details they notice and how the image reflects at least one economic, political, social or geographic factor related to slavery (focusing only on their assigned category). Students should reference their homework to support their observations. As a class, discuss their thoughts, which might include some of the following ideas:

- **Economic:** Enslaved people were often kidnapped and sold South because it was profitable for enslavers.
- **Political:** Changing laws and action by the courts against slavery motivated enslavers to sell their “property” out of fear that they might soon lose their legal right to ownership.

NOTE

If possible, enlarge pages 2–10 of the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit and post the pages around the room. Invite students to move around and view the posted panels as they work so the experience feels a bit more like being in a museum.

¹ Safian, Gail R. “Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History.” Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association Inc. in consultation with South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. <https://villagegreennj.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/juneteenth-exhibit.pdf>

- Social: White enslavers wielded social and physical power over enslaved people; it was acceptable for them to sell enslaved people, beat them, and otherwise treat them as chattel or personal property.
- Geographic: The advent of railroads in 1829 made it easier to transport enslaved people across states.

7 In their table groups, have students continue to discuss economic, political, social and geographic factors that sustained or led to the abolition of slavery in New Jersey. Remind them to focus on the category their group has been assigned, and to reference the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit and their homework as they share.

PART III

Focus on the Forces of Abolition (45–90 minutes, depending on the independent projects chosen)

8 Tell students they will work on an independent project focused on their assigned factor (economic, political, social or geographic) as it relates specifically to resistance by enslaved people and “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit. Post and review the following definitions:

- Abolition: The act of getting rid of something
- Abolitionist: A person taking action to eliminate slavery

9 Distribute the *Choice Board* handout and go over the options with students. Allow them to choose one project to work on individually, with a partner or as a group. Provide students with access to laptops or tablets as well as other relevant materials, and give them time in class to complete their projects.

10 When students are done, have them share and discuss their work in small groups that contain a mix of students who have completed different projects. Hang up work that is in a displayable form and allow students to briefly examine their classmates’ projects.

11 As a class, debrief their experience delving into the *Slavery in New Jersey* exhibit using some of the discussion questions on the next page.

Discussion Questions

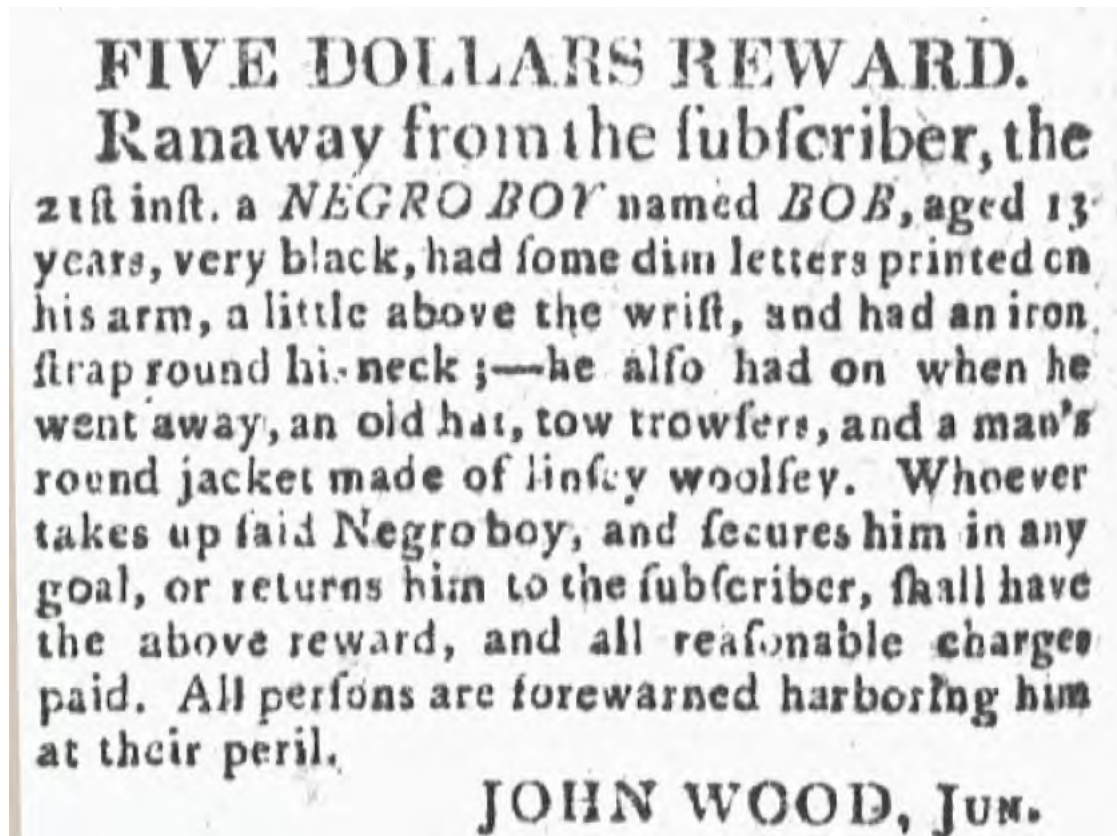
- 1 Were you surprised to learn that chattel slavery existed and endured in New Jersey for almost 200 years? Why?
- 2 Why do you think the history of slavery in the North is often missing from our history books or lessons? What do you think these omissions tell us?
- 3 How has your understanding of slavery in our region changed?
- 4 Have any of your perceptions about slavery been challenged?
- 5 Which examples of resistance to slavery did you find most effective or inspiring?
- 6 What methods of resistance used by abolitionists do you think can be applied to problems in today's world?
- 7 What questions still remain for you about slavery in New Jersey?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + CamCo History. "Slave Ships on the Delaware: A Story of Camden, NJ." March 29, 2009. YouTube video, 7:23. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-juuB9SZr2A>.
- + Gigantino, James J. *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775–1865*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- + Harper, Douglas. "Slavery in New Jersey." 2003. <http://slavenorth.com/newjersey.htm>.
- + Hennelley, Robert. "Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey's DNA." *Salon*, July 29, 2015. https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna.
- + NJTV News. "NJ Stops Along the Underground Railroad." February 16, 2015. YouTube video, 3:14. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_a9e4nWro68.
- + NJTV News. "Stops on the Underground Railroad in New Jersey." February 16, 2012. YouTube video, 3:06. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGAgpJUiWjE>.
- + NPR. "New Jersey Apologizes for Slavery." *Tell Me More*. January 8, 2008. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17925822>.
- + Princeton University. "The Princeton & Slavery Project." <https://slavery.princeton.edu>.
- + Rutgers University. "Slavery in New Jersey Lesson Plan." New Jersey Center for Civic Education. <http://civiced.rutgers.edu/files/nj/Slavery%20in%20NJ.docx>.
- + Switala, William J. *Underground Railroad in New Jersey and New York*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006.



Five Dollars Reward



Transcription:

FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.

Ranaway from the subscriber, the 21st inst. A NEGRO BOY named BOB, aged 13 years, very black, had some dim letters printed on his arm, a little above the wrist, and had an iron strap around his neck;—he also had on when he went away, an old hat, tow trousers, and a man's round jacket made of linsey woolsey. Whoever takes up said Negro boy, and secures him in any goal, or returns him to the subscriber, shall have the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid. All persons are forewarned harboring him at their peril.

JOHN WOOD, Jun.

NOTES:

Tow cloth was a coarse heavy linen used for clothing in the 18th century.

Linsey woolsey was a coarse fabric woven from linen or cotton and a wool filling.



NOTES: SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY

NAME: _____

Read pages 2–10 of the exhibit about the history of slavery in New Jersey. As you read, consider the economic, political, social and geographic factors that sustained slavery or led to the abolition of slavery. For each section, write notes on the chart in at least two columns.

SECTION	ECONOMIC <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	POLITICAL <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	SOCIAL <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	GEOGRAPHIC <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
Page 2: <i>How It All Started</i>				
Page 3: <i>The Growth of Slavery in NJ</i>				

NOTES: SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY (CONTINUED)



SECTION	ECONOMIC <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	POLITICAL <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	SOCIAL <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	GEOGRAPHIC <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
Page 4: <i>The Revolutionary War</i>				
Page 5: <i>Slavery in NJ Declined</i>				
Page 6: <i>The Civil War</i>				
Pages 7–10: <i>The Forces of Abolition</i>				

SOLD TO GO SOUTH



From an old print

SOLD TO GO SOUTH



Choice Board: The Forces of Abolition

NAME: _____

Choose one of the projects below under your assigned category and explore how enslaved people and abolitionists worked to end slavery in New Jersey. Revisit “The Forces of Abolition” section of the exhibit (pages 7–10) and conduct online research to help you gather information and ideas.

ECONOMIC <i>Relating to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services</i>	POLITICAL <i>Relating to the government or the public affairs of a country, state, city or town</i>	SOCIAL <i>Relating to society or its organization, and the way people and groups interact</i>	GEOGRAPHIC <i>Relating to the nature and physical features of places, and their arrangement</i>
Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two ECONOMIC incentives. The flier should include your group's name, ideas and an illustration.	Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two POLITICAL incentives. The flier should include your group's name, ideas and an illustration.	Research the abolition movement in NJ. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier that persuades the public to abolish slavery by highlighting at least two SOCIAL incentives. The flier should include your group's name, ideas and an illustration.	Research NJ ports and towns that were centers for the importation of enslaved people. Imagine you are part of an abolition group and create a flier advertising an upcoming abolition meeting in one of those cities or towns. The flier should include your group's name, at least three facts about the importation of enslaved people and an illustration.
One way enslaved people resisted slavery was to sabotage work and limit profits (e.g. by breaking tools or faking sickness). Research ways enslaved people disrupted economic activity and create a storyboard with at least three illustrated panels that tells this story.	Black Americans published many petitions and wrote letters to Congress making the case for abolition. Draft your own petition or letter in which you present at least three reasons why NJ should abolish slavery.	Research abolitionists Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, who ran the Eagleswood school, which was in a community that may have been a stop on the Underground Railroad (see p. 10 of the exhibit). Design a monument to honor their work that includes a plaque describing their accomplishments.	NJ's geography made it an important link on the Underground Railroad. Research “stations” in New Jersey and create a map showing possible routes to freedom passing through the state. Include labels and symbols showing how freedom seekers might have traveled and through which towns and cities they may have passed.
Many enslaved people ran away, winning their freedom and hurting their enslavers economically. Choose one of the reward notices on p. 3 of the exhibit. Imagine the enslaved person in the ad made it to freedom in Canada. Write an article for a local newspaper there describing their journey.	Research anti-slavery laws in NJ resulting from Quaker activism and the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (SPAS) (see p. 8 of the exhibit). Create a short speech for the next SPAS meeting that celebrates the passage of one of these laws and describes its requirements.	Black churches played an active role in abolition and the Underground Railroad. Research a NJ church and prepare a brief slide presentation that educates your classmates about its anti-slavery work. Examples include the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church near Swedesboro, Bethel A.M.E. Church in Greenwich Township and First Presbyterian Church in Newark.	In 1838, Jacob Brown, a freed enslaved person, bought eight acres of land in Fair Haven, NJ. He subdivided the land and sold pieces to his friends and family. Research Brown and create a design of the new neighborhood. Include a school, church, farms, shops and homes, and labels that describe how the residents used the land to create a free and independent existence for themselves.