

THE ORIGINS OF STEREOTYPES IN POP CULTURE



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What types of racial stereotypes have been perpetuated by the media and how have they changed over time?
- How do media portrayals of race influence our attitudes in conscious and unconscious ways?



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Examine the development of “Blackface” and other racial stereotypes as forms of entertainment during the antebellum period of the South.
- Explain how social media and other platforms have adapted racial stereotypes in present-day culture.
- Write an informational essay in 2–3 paragraphs that discusses the implications and dangers of using racial stereotypes without understanding the history behind them.



LEARNING STANDARDS

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



TIME NEEDED

75–90 minutes



MATERIALS

- Teacher Edition—Vocabulary Planning and Definitions
- Antebellum Gallery Images
- Antebellum Graphic Organizer
- The Worst Fashion Missteps of 2019, from bullet hole hoodies to Gucci’s straightjacket, Adapted from USA Today
- Worst Fashion Missteps Article Reading Note Taker



VOCABULARY

CONTENT

Antebellum	Minstrel Show
Romanticize	AAVE (African American Vernacular English)
Inhumane	Mammy
Intimidation	

Technology

Noose

ACADEMIC

Analyze

Evaluate

Collaborate

Discuss

Engage

Informative/
Explanatory

PROCEDURES

2

PART 1 Introduction (15 mins.)

1 Say: *Today we will examine the antebellum period of the South. Has anyone heard about this period of our history or does anyone know the word antebellum? (Allow for students to answer.) It is often a period in our country's history that is overly romanticized, meaning made to seem much better than it was, but it exposes the cruel and inhumane treatment of enslaved people. Before we begin reading, writing, and discussing this period, I want us to engage in a gallery walk of photos from this period so that you can begin to develop a sense of what the climate was like during this time in our country.*

2 Directions for the gallery walk:

- Set up 2–3 pictures per station. A station can be a table or a group of desks. You should have 4 stations within your classroom.
- Students will have 12 minutes, 3 minutes per station, to view pictures and, using the graphic organizer, write down what they notice and what they think life was like for whites and enslaved Africans during the time of the photos.
- At the end of the data collection, students will share general thoughts about the activity using the following discussion questions (2 minutes):

NOTE

Antebellum: a period between 1812 and 1861 characterized by the rise in abolitionist movements but also a polarization between abolitionists and those who supported and benefitted from slavery; defined by violence against enslaved Black people and extreme economic growth due to cotton production and sales.

1 What did you notice?

2 What distinguished the way Black people were represented versus the way white people were represented?

3 What do these pictures say/what message is being conveyed?
What is the story they tell?

PART 2

Content Analysis (40 min)

- 3 Say: *There are two parts to the word antebellum. If we break down its roots in Latin, ante means before, and bellum means war. This time period is stretched between the War of 1812 and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. This period was defined by violence against millions of enslaved Black people at the same time as extreme economic growth of the United States.*
- 4 Say: *To keep the social structures the same, white slave owners, businessmen, and men in the upper class of society did a few things. First, they continued to advocate for slavery and benefit from the free labor it provided. Next, they used violence and intimidation to ingrain fear in generations of people born into slavery. And finally, they asserted their control by producing images, literature, and performances that presented enslaved Black people as less than human/sub-human. We are going to analyze the rise of Blackface as a means to control the narrative about enslaved people during this period.*
- 5 Paired Discussion: Turn and talk for 2 minutes about the following question: **Why would these people—white, wealthy, and powerful men—feel the need to control the narrative (make up stories for others to follow) about enslaved Black people?** After 2 minutes, ask for a few volunteers to present what they discussed. Chart these responses and post them in the classroom for students to refer to during their writing.
- 6 Set students up for a deep dive analysis of pop culture references over time. They will be using their graphic organizer/ notetaker to take notes about the same questions from the gallery walk: What do they notice? What distinguished the way Black people were represented versus the way white people were represented? What do these pictures say/what message is being conveyed? What is the story they tell?
- 7 Say: *Thomas Dartmouth Rice was a theater actor born in New York. He is considered the “Father of Minstrelsy,” or the creator of the minstrel shows. It is said that after he traveled to Southern states like Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, etc., he observed enslaved people in their slave quarters and engaged in free labor. He then developed a Black stage character called “Jim Crow” in 1830. Ask students: **What benefit did he have in creating this Black stage character? What would encourage a person to do this?** (for example: lack of empathy/seeing Black people as less than human, sympathizing with slave owners, making money off of the culture of the South, interest in Black people’s behavior, etc.)*

- 8** Say: *He created dance moves, exaggerated African American vernacular (speech), and developed silly behavior. He founded a new genre of racialized song and dance—blackface minstrel shows—which became common and popular in American entertainment in the North and South. Here is a short clip of a reenactment of his performances, as they didn't have recording technology in 1830:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALTam2L9NhE>
- 9** Give students 4–5 minutes to write responses to the questions in the sidebar before moving on to the next video or article.
- 10** Say: *We will now take a look at a short video of a performance by a famous white performer named Al Jolson singing a very famous song of this time period called “My Mammy.” Has anyone heard this term before or know what a mammy is? (Generate responses if any.) A mammy is a black nursemaid or nanny who cares for and serves white children. Don't forget, as we watch, you are looking to answer those three questions.*
- 11** Read aloud the introduction paragraph to the USA Today article entitled, *The Worst Fashion Missteps of 2019, from Bullet-hole Hoodies to Gucci's Straightjacket*, while students read along silently. Then create two reading sections (Burberry Noose Hoodie and Gucci's Offensive Turtleneck Sweater), with two groups assigned to each of the sections. They will use the same guiding questions from the sidebar as they read and capture notes as a group on their graphic organizer/notetaker. Once they are done preparing notes, each group will present. As groups are presenting, encourage students to take notes on their graphic organizer/notetaker. Students will have 8 minutes to read and 2 minutes for each group to share. (16–18 minutes total)

PART 3

Writing (30 min)

- 12** Say: *Now that we have built our knowledge around the origins of Blackface during the antebellum period in our country's history, we will write an opinion piece that describes the dangers of images that promote racial stereotypes without understanding the history of these images. Use all your notes to help you form an opinion about what you have discovered today. Your writing should include the following:*
- *A clear topic where you organize your ideas and information using strategies such as compare/contrast, and cause/effect. You can include things like headings, charts, and tables, to help us understand your points.*

QUESTIONS

- 1** What did you notice?
- 2** What distinguished the way Black people were represented versus the way white people were represented?
- 3** What do these pictures say/what message is being conveyed? What is the story they tell?

- *Include relevant facts, definitions, important details, quotations, or other information and examples.*
- *Use appropriate transition (then, next, therefore, etc.) words to connect your thoughts and ideas.*
- *Use academic language and vocabulary from this lesson to explain the topic.*
- *Write for an academic audience of your peers.*
- *End with a conclusion statement.*

13 Have students ask any clarifying questions. You may want to use sentence stems or write an example to show students what their writing should look like. Students should be given time to determine what they wish to focus on (minstrel shows, recent fashion, images presented). Students will have 25 minutes to write 1–2 paragraphs.

PART 4 **Share/Closing (5 min)**

14 Student volunteers share their writing aloud and are given words of encouragement from their classmates. You can set this up as a **wow** (something that they loved) and a **wonder** (something they have a question about related to content) now that they have new information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

+ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqID-eZm1ck>



Teacher Edition: Vocabulary Definitions

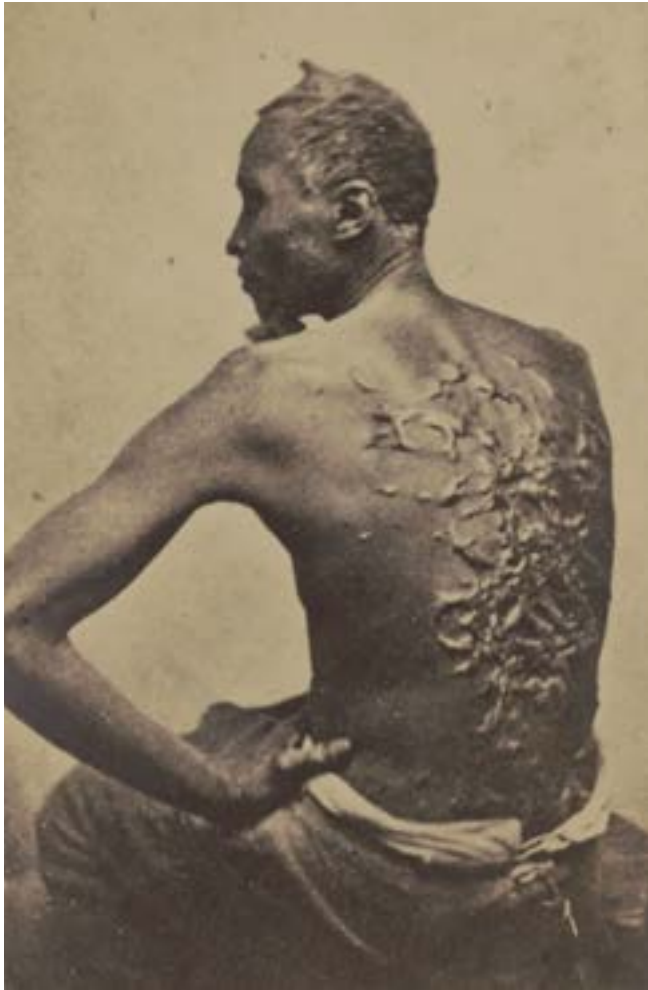
This document is meant to serve to build teacher knowledge and capacity. Please use the following document to know and understand the vocabulary for this lesson. Review and define these terms before teaching your lesson to help better understand and frame the content. There is also space to add any context necessary for your students.

Word	Definition	Teacher Notes/Context
CONTENT VOCABULARY		
Antebellum		
Romanticize		
Inhumane		
Intimidation		
Minstrel Show		
AAVE		
Mammy		
Technology		
Noose		
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY		
Analyze		
Evaluate		
Collaborate		
Discuss		
Engage		
Informative/Explanatory		



Antebellum Gallery Images

PETER



An escaped enslaved man named Peter showed his scarred back at a medical examination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1863. Library of Congress

PLANTATION HOMES



Library of Congress. A group of enslaved people in front of the Smith's Plantation in South Carolina. Circa 1862.

FAMILIES



Enslaved Africans produced multiple generations of Americans. Although they were born into this country and had families here for multiple generations, they were not considered Americans (or human) only property. Library of Congress



Antebellum Gallery Images

PLANTATION FESTIVAL



Woman in a hoop skirt outside Oak Square Plantation during the Heritage Festival in Port Gibson, Mississippi, USA. Even though this period was marked by some of the cruelest treatment of enslaved people, many white southerners celebrate this period with reenactments and themed parties. Artist: Chris Selby. Photo. 2014

PLANTATION HOMES



Two women wearing antebellum dresses walk with parasols on the grounds of the historic Latta Plantation in Huntersville, North Carolina, another more recent reenactment, ultimately a celebration, of the Antebellum time period. Kevin McCarthy. 2019.



Antebellum Gallery Images

PLANTATION FESTIVAL



Culpepper, VA. John Minor Botts and family in mourning clothes. There were generations born into the way of life of slavery and racial segregation. Library of Congress.

PLANTATION HOMES



In the 1830s, men wore dark coats, light trousers, and dark cravats for daywear. Women's sleeves reached their ultimate width in the gigot sleeve. Here, the boys (on holiday in the mountains) wear buff-colored belted knee-length tunics with yokes and full sleeves over trousers. The girls wear white dresses with colored aprons. The Family of Dr. Josef August Eltz, Austria, 1835. (Wikipedia)



Antebellum Graphic Organizer

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Please use this graphic organizer to collect your thoughts about the pictures. Answer the questions: What do you notice about the picture? What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture? Don't forget to write the name of the picture in the blank space.

Picture 1: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?

Picture 2: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?

Picture 3: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?



Antebellum Graphic Organizer

Picture 4: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?

Picture 5: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?

Picture 6: _____

What do you notice about the picture?	What do you think life was like for different people during the time of this picture?



The Worst Fashion Missteps of 2019, from Bullet-Hole Hoodies to Gucci's Straightjacket

By Sara M Moniuszko

This article was adapted from USA Today for educational purposes.
Published 9:11 am, November 2019

Unfortunately, this trend isn't new. Big brands have come under fire in the past for similar missteps. In 2018, international retail giant H&M ignited a firestorm with an ad in the U.K. that featured a black child modeling a hoodie printed with the phrase "coolest monkey in the jungle." The same year, Prada pulled its Otto character after images of the black animal with oversized red lips exploded on social media, sparking comparisons to blackface.

So, as 2019 comes to a close, we're looking back at some of the worst fashion missteps of the year (listed in no particular order).



Burberry's noose hoodie

Burberry apologized in February for featuring a hoodie with a noose around the neck during a show for the fashion brand's autumn/winter 2019 collection at London Fashion Week.

Model Liz Kennedy, who was featured in the show, took to Instagram to express her frustration with the brand for featuring the hoodie, adding that she was "ashamed to have been apart of the show."

"We are deeply sorry for the distress caused by one of the products that featured in our A/W 2019 runway collection Tempest," Burberry CEO Marco Gobetti said in a statement provided to CNN and Highsnobiety.

"Though the design was inspired by the marine theme that ran throughout the collection, it was insensitive and we made a mistake," the statement read.

Gucci's offensive turtleneck sweater

The same month, a \$890 Gucci jumper sparked outrage on social media for resembling blackface.

The piece from Gucci's Fall Winter 2018 runway show looks like a black turtleneck that is worn up over the nose, with a red-lined cutout for customers' mouths. It was inspired by "vintage ski masks," according to its product description, which says it could also be worn just around the neck.



The company later apologized and removed the product. The Italian fashion house also announced a major push to step up diversity hiring as part of a long-term plan to build cultural awareness at the luxury fashion company following the uproar.



Worst Fashion Missteps Article Reading Notetaker

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Please use this sheet to take notes as you read the article. Be sure to share something new that you learned.

3 THINGS THAT I LEARNED

1

2

3

2 CONNECTIONS TO THE GALLERY WALK

1

2

1 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE READING (2-3 SENTENCES)