

A Deplorable Entanglement: Picturing Race and Gender at Monticello

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Cooperative Learning

Duration

2 blocks (160 minutes)

Objectives

Overview

Students will use image and document analysis to gain an understanding of slave life in general, slave life specifically at Monticello, and how the concepts of race and gender play into slavery and plantation life.

Prior Knowledge

In 11th grade, students learned about the institution of slavery, the geographic reasons for its growth in the South and the impact that it had on the country as a whole. If the teacher feels it necessary, they can do a brief review of the history of slavery in the United States. In a previous lesson, students examined Jefferson's views in slavery and the inferiority of African Americans.

State Standards

This lesson meets New York State Learning Standard for Social Studies1

History of the United States and New York

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

SOURCE: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/socstand/home.html>

This lesson will also meet the following Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7](#) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8](#) Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9](#) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

SOURCE: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12>

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate images for content and context on slavery in the United States generally and at Monticello specifically
2. Analyze primary and secondary sources of various media for gender bias.
3. Establish connections between events of the 18th century and life today.

Essential Questions

1. Is slavery under the man who wrote the words, "...all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"? And does it really matter?
2. Is treating slaves well enough to undo the harm of keeping people in bondage?

Procedures

1. 10 minutes

Quick Write: Thomas Jefferson never used the words “slaves” or “slavery” when referring to Monticello. Instead, in his writings we see words like servants, family, or individuals being referred to by name. What can you infer about Jefferson’s feelings about slavery from this language? (10 minutes)(Teacher should come back to this at the end of class to see if students still agree with their answers after a closer look at slavery at Monticello)

2. 45 minutes

Monticello Web Quest: Students may work individually or in pairs to answer the following questions by using the site: <http://www.monticello.org/mulberry-row>. What were the main crops grown at Monticello? What other businesses were there?

b. What types of activities were needed to run the big house? Who performed these activities (classifications of people are okay, you will not necessarily find specific names) and how?

c. What type of work was typically given to female slaves? To male slaves?

d. What punishments were deemed acceptable by Jefferson for misbehaving slaves? Under what circumstances?

e. Were slaves allowed to earn money? If so, how? What would they do with that income?

f. Did any of Jefferson’s slaves revolt and protest their status? If so, how?

g. Using the Gallery tab, look at the pictures that are available today of Buildings R, S, and T, the Nailery, and the Smoke House. Why do you think so little is left of them today, as opposed to the main house of Monticello?

h. Using the Meet People tab, choose at least 5 people to read about- at least 2 must be enslaved people (not every tab has a link, make sure you are picking tabs which link to more information) and write down the person’s name, status (slave, free, etc), the time period they were at Monticello, and their occupation at Monticello. Note any commonalities that you notice. How might the stories have been different if they were written by the person themselves, at that time? How might the intended audience change what is written?

i. Now, go to the Getting Word site at <http://www.monticello.org/getting-word> and see if you can find any of the descendants of the people that you looked up. What are these people up to today? Are there any connections between what they do and what their ancestor did? Do you think their ancestors would be surprised by their status and accomplishments?

Answers should be written down and will be collected.

3. 35 minutes

Independent Work: Each student should use the computer to look at the following images: A. Who Lives at Monticello

- B. Cooks Room
- C. Weekly Food Ration for a Slave
- D. Working in Monticello's Kitchen
- E. Runaway Ad
- F. Sale of Monticello Ad

And then answer the following questions: What do these images tell us today about the life of a slave at Monticello in the 18th & 19th centuries? Pick one of the above images and write a paragraph describing the life of a slave based on that photo, and what you learned on the Mulberry Row site. When you are done, you will share that paragraph with others in the class. (Teacher can decide if it's a pair share or a whole class share)

Paragraphs will then be collected and graded.

4. *30 minutes*

Group Discussion: Teacher will project selected images from classroom.monticello.org (see "Related Assets" below for image links) on a SMARTboard/white board for the entire class to see, and then ask the following questions. Students should jot down responses in their notebooks, and a class discussion will follow: Images are:

- A. Breakfast with the Madisons
- B. Jefferson's Family Enjoying the Parlor
- C. School Lessons in the South Square Room

Questions are:

- a. How are the blacks and whites portrayed in these images? What clues are given to their status?
- b. What time period do you think these pictures were painted during? Why do you think that?
- c. Notice that at least one of the pictures portrays visitors to Monticello, in addition to the residents. How do you think visitors might have felt about the slaves, and how might the slaves have viewed the visitors? What challenges might visitors have presented to all of the residents of Monticello?
- d. Knowing the history of slavery in our country, why do you think the artist chose to include enslaved people in these pictures at all? What are some of the positives and negatives of their inclusion?
- e. Most of the house slaves at Monticello were Hemingses and were related to the Jefferson family by blood, either through Jefferson himself or through his late father in law. How does that reality

change your perception of the images?

5. *20 minutes*

Document Analysis: Next, the teacher should hand out the letters to Peter Carr and Patsy regarding education, titled Letters of Jefferson and Gender Education. Have students read through them and note the differences between the two. Thinking about the differences between the work that male slaves performed and that female slaves performed, are they surprised by the difference? Knowing that Jefferson's only legitimate surviving children are daughters, are they surprised by the difference? Or, was Jefferson merely a man of his time?

- *20 minutes*

Wrap up Lecture/Discussion: The teacher should finish the lesson with a round up lecture/discussion on Jefferson's views on gender and race. Discuss Jefferson's quote from his 1820 letter to John Wayles Eppes: "I consider a woman who brings a child every two years as more profitable than the best man of the farm," Jefferson remarked in 1820. "What she produces is an addition to the capital, while his labors disappear in mere consumption."

([.http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/property](http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/property))What does this mean for female slaves? What does it mean for their children?

Discuss the fact that all of the slaves that he freed were men (and Hemingses- is there a class aspect to slavery at Monticello as well? I think it can certainly be argued, and is worth discussing to see what the students think) and that the only people at Monticello that were taught skilled trades were men.

Then compare male slaves being taught a trade to Peter Carr's letter, and the work of female slaves to Patsy's letter. Ask the students to sum up what they think Jefferson's views on race and gender really were.

Materials

Materials Needed

paper, pens, handouts

Technology Needs

computers with internet access

Assessment

Homework

Read the attached OpEd piece on Jefferson, The Monster of the Monticello, by Paul Finkelman:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/01/opinion/the-real-thomas-jefferson.html?_r=0

Is it a fair analysis of Jefferson as a person? What do you feel is missing from this analysis? Is the author applying modern day concepts of race, class, and gender or 18th century concepts of race, class, and gender? Does that matter? Why or why not? How difficult is it for you in the 21st century to understand how Jefferson could have rationalized his enlightenment views on freedom and equality with owning slaves? Have you ever had to make a choice based something other than your own morality? How did that feel? (If you haven't, think of an example from a book or movie- how did the character feel?) Do you think that Jefferson might have had similar feelings? How might we know that today?

Answers should be typed. Homework will be collected and graded.

Assessment

WebQuest research and Paragraphs on slave life done in class.

Accommodations

Accommodations – Students with Special Needs

The teacher may wish to adjust the level and amount of readings by excerpting. Also, teacher might want to ask students to underline where in the letters Jefferson mentions anything to do with education, and start the discussion from there.



Th. Jefferson
MONTICELLO