

Lesson Plan: The Domestic Slave Trade

Intended Audience

Students in Grades 8-12

Background

The importation of slaves to the United States from foreign countries was outlawed by the Act of March 2, 1807. After January 1, 1808, it was illegal to import slaves; however, the domestic slave trade thrived within the United States. With the rise of cotton in the Deep South slaves were moved and traded from state to state. Slaves were treated as commodities and listed as such on ship manifests as cargo. Slave manifests included such information as slaves' names, ages, heights, sex and "class". This lesson introduces students to the domestic slave trade between the states by analyzing slave manifest records of ships coming and going through the port of New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Documents

Slave Manifest of the *Brig Algerine*, March 25, 1826; Slave Manifests, 1817-1856 and 1860-1861 (E. 1630); Records of the U.S. Customs Service—New Orleans, Record Group 36; National Archives at Fort Worth.

Slave Manifest of the *Brig Virginia*, November 18, 1823; Slave Manifests, 1817-1856 and 1860-1861 (E. 1630); Records of the U.S. Customs Service—New Orleans, Record Group 36; National Archives at Fort Worth.

Standards Correlations

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

- Era 4 Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
 - Standard 2-How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions.

Teaching Activities

Time Required:

One class period

Materials Needed:

Copies of the Documents

Copies of the Document Analysis worksheet

Analyzing the Documents

Provide each student with a copy of the Written Document Analysis worksheet. Have the students work with a partner and provide each pair with a copy of the Manifest of the *Brig Algerine*. Allow the students plenty of time to fill in the worksheet and then use it for the basis of a discussion.

Answer the following questions by analyzing the front side of the manifest:

- What was the name of the vessel transporting the slaves?
- Who was the captain of the vessel?
- From what port did it leave?
- Where is the vessel going?
- What can you infer from the list of slaves?
- What is the purpose of the column “Whether Negro, Mulatto, or person of Color?”
- Who was the owner of these slaves?
- To whom was he consigning the slaves?
- What was the purpose of the sworn statement at the bottom of the front of the document? (Review the discussion of slavery and the compromises reached in the writing of the Constitution and the Act of March 2, 1807.)
- Who signed the manifest?
- When did the vessel leave port?

Answer the following questions by analyzing the back side of the manifest for the *Brig Algerine*:

The statement is made by the Customs House official of Baltimore, James H. McCulloch.

- To what is he swearing?
- What can the captain now do?
- Note that Austin Woolfolk’s name is incorrectly placed in the blank where James H. McCulloch’s name should have been written as Collector of the District of Baltimore.
- Who is John Daly?
- To what is he swearing?
- When did he conduct the inspection?

Provide each pair of students with a copy of the Manifest of the *Brig Virginia*. Ask students to analyze the manifest and note any differences from the Manifest of the *Brig Algerine*:

- Note that the word “free” has been inserted with persons of Color.
- Note that the vessel and captain are different.
- Note the date of sailing to and arriving in New Orleans are different.
- Note that in the bottom statement sworn to by Collector James H. McCulloch, he has scratched out the word “not” to indicate that these individuals are entitled to freedom.
- Note that the woman/mother Lucy Boyer is considered the shipper and she signs with her mark.
- Note the text that was changed on the back of the form. Why was it changed?
- Why would a Free Person of Color want to move to New Orleans from Baltimore?

Writing Exercise

Have the students write a letter to one of the authors of the Constitution stating what is now (1808-1865) happening with the issue of slavery. If students keep a journal or interactive notebook, it could be written there.

Teacher Notes

When students are asked to draw mental pictures of slavery, they might describe slaves picking cotton, slaves sailing in ships coming from Africa, or slaves being whipped or sold. Many students see the sale being between neighboring plantations with the slave walking to his or her new owner’s land. What students may not realize is the numerous slaves sold and transported by ship between the states.

As the population moved west into new territories, slaves were transported and sold to fill the need for labor in these new areas. Over a million slaves from the eastern seaboard, (approximately 60% of the Upper South's slave population), as far north as Boston, were transported by the coastal waterways and sold in the southern and the "old southwest" states (western Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas) between 1808 and 1865. New Orleans became the largest slave market, followed by Richmond, Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina.

Austin and John Woolfolk were well known slave traders from the 1820s to early 1840s, transporting and selling over 2600 slaves between Baltimore and New Orleans.

In 1827, abolitionist Benjamin Lundy wrote an article criticizing their business in his newspaper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. Austin was so incensed about it that he assaulted Lundy which led to an arrest and trial. Frederick Douglass also referred to the Woolfolks in his *July 4th Oration*.

U.S. Customs Houses, which were created by Congress in 1789 as part of the Department of the Treasury, kept track of the movement of slaves by requiring manifests. A manifest is a list of a ship's cargo, and since slaves were considered property and not citizens, the Customs Houses recorded both the inward bound and outward bound slaves at U.S. ports. James McCulloch was named Collector of the Customs for Baltimore by President James Monroe on January 7, 1822.

Balize was a small port in the mouth of the Mississippi river, 85 miles south of New Orleans, where a vessel had to first stop and be inspected. In the late 1800s Balize was renamed Pilottown. In 2005, there were only 20 people living in Pilottown and Hurricane Katrina destroyed the area.

During the early part of the 19th century, thousands of free persons of Color arrived in New Orleans, many from Saint Domingue, present day Haiti, after the slave revolts of the late 1700s and early 1800s. Free persons of color were also affected by the same laws that required the slave manifests. The manifest of the *Brig Virginia* includes the names of Lucy Boyer and her children who were free persons of Color. Lucy Boyer is found on the 1810 Federal Census living in Kent Co., Maryland in the Baltimore area and was listed as a free person. The 1850 Federal Census records Boyer living in New Orleans Municipality 2, Ward 4. She is listed as 80 years old, born in Pennsylvania, and has no property. Living at the same address as Boyer on the 1850 census record were the following individuals: Cecilia Rowe, a female mulatto, age 39; William Tufts, a white merchant born in Massachusetts, age 50 and owns \$10,000 in real estate; S.L. Fowler, a white clerk born in Massachusetts, age 40; and Jas. R. Guthien, a white Jewish clergyman from Germany, age 30. The 1860 federal census record lists Boyer as 90 years of age and living with relatives in New Orleans. Boyer does not appear in the 1870 federal census. Boyer's son, Robert D. Smith moved to Natchez, Mississippi and started a carriage/taxi business. The home he built is still lived in and appeared on a segment of the PBS television show, *The History Detectives* (http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigations/105_natchezhouse.html). What conclusions can be drawn about Boyer's life from the information provided on the census records?

That so many slaves were sold or transplanted to the South with their owners, many of whom moved their whole plantations, touches the human soul. By examining the manifests students have another way to view this tragic chapter of American history.

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