

Lesson Plan to Supplement *Exodus and Exile: The Spaces of Diaspora*

This lesson plan focuses on the African-American Diaspora

Areas of study this lesson plan might complement:

- U.S. History/ Comparative history
- Global Studies
- African-American History
- Slavery in the American South
- The Harlem Renaissance
- The Civil Rights Movement
- History of race/race relations in the U.S.

Skills:

- Reading comprehension
- Analysis and interpretation
- Analytical writing
- Research

Topics/Key Words:

- Diaspora
- Atlantic slave trade
- Slavery in the Americas

Objective:

- To encourage students to see slavery through the lens of diaspora
- To demonstrate to students that slavery was a phenomenon in all of the Americas, not just in the U.S.
- To familiarize students with the emotional and cultural tolls of diaspora and slavery
- To ask students to apply the concepts of diaspora to other areas of U.S. History
- To encourage students to view history comparatively and holistically
- To introduce students to the concept of race as a social construct

Review and Interpretative Questions:

These questions are separated by section. Please ask students to view the exhibition and read the explanatory text. Then they may answer the questions individually in writing, or the questions might be used as discussion questions.

Exhibition Home/Introduction

1. FULLY define diaspora. What distinguishes diaspora from migration? What emotional sentiment is central to the idea of diaspora?
2. Before you go any further, can you name any diasporas in American history?
3. Why does the Great Migration not qualify as a diaspora?

“Origins of the African-American Diaspora”

1. How long did the Atlantic slave trade last? How many Africans were enslaved?
2. Were African Americans able to maintain their culture and heritage in the Americas? Why or why not?
3. In the 1950’s and 1960’s the slave experience was reinterpreted in light of the concept of diaspora. Does this reinterpretation alter the way we view slavery? If so, how?
4. View the Mercator map from 1633 in comparison with a modern map of Africa. How are they different?
5. View the Heirs Map from 1730. How are Africans presented in the picture in the bottom left corner?
6. Considering your answers to questions 4 and 5, how much did Europeans know about Africa and Africans? How did their lack of knowledge contribute to a mindset that would have made slavery palatable?
7. View the map by Montanus from 1671 about the Dutch capture of Elmina. What does the image of battle tell us? (Answer: that Dutch fought with the help of African allies.) Does knowing that Africans allied with Europeans change your image of the slave trade?

“Africans in the Americas”

1. What is the “middle passage”? About how many slaves died in the “middle passage”?
2. Why do we have such detailed statistical recording about the transportation of slaves to the Americas? What does that tell you about attitudes toward slavery?
3. Which nation received the largest percentage of slaves?
4. In arrivals 2 and 3, what was the percentage of slaves received by North America?
5. Is this information surprising to you? Did you expect that a higher percentage of slaves would have arrived in the U.S.?
6. How does the map by Blaeu portray slaves and slavery in Brazil?
7. What are “maroons”?
8. The ways that people occupy space can tell us a lot about social relationships. What do the maps in the section “African Slaves in the West Indies” tell you about the relationships between Africans and whites? (See maps 36 and 38 and text.)
9. According to maps 40 and 41, how was this social relationship (see previous question) the same or different in Portland?

“The Return to Africa”

1. When and why was Liberia created? What did this place represent for African Americans?

Short Essay or Discussion Questions:

1. Write up your answer to #3 under “Origins of the African-American Diaspora” as an essay.

2. Explain how the African-American slave trade qualifies as an example of diaspora. To do this, first define diaspora, then explain how the slave trade fits into the definition of diaspora. What evidence do you see of yearning for homeland, one of the important aspects of diaspora? Develop your answer thoroughly and thoughtfully.
3. According to what you know about slavery and American history and society, how have African-Americans attempted to maintain their African cultures? What has helped or hindered their efforts?

Essay Questions:

1. How have slavery and race relations shaped the modern-day U.S.? (Race relations are defined as: relations – social, political and economic – between members of two or more human races, especially within a single community.) Use specifics to support your answer.
2. For students studying the Harlem Renaissance: How does the concept of diaspora and of yearning for homeland influence the art, literature, politics and social theory of the Harlem Renaissance? (In particular, students might view the art of Aaron Douglass, Read George Schuyler’s “The Negro-Art Hokum” and Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” or review the philosophies of Alain Locke and Marcus Garvey, especially in comparison with W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington.)

Extension I:

This project complements the study of slavery in the U.S. and might be used in a U.S. History or Global Studies class. *This extension requires access to research facilities such as a library or computer lab (or both).*

1. Individually or as a class, ask students to research slavery in Brazil.
2. Ask students, either in writing or in class discussion, to compare slavery in the U.S. and in Brazil. They can use what they have already learned in class about slavery in the U.S. and compare that to their research on slavery in Brazil. You might ask them to create a chart or Venn diagram to document the similarities and differences they find.
3. Then ask students to research the legacy of slavery in Brazil, or race relations in Brazil. Race relations are defined as: relations (social, political and economic) between members of two or more human races, especially within a single community.
 - a. A simple Google search for “race relations in Brazil” yields lots of results.
OR
 - b. Some websites that you might suggest they view:
 - i. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5225097>
 - ii. <http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/brazil/news/legacyslavery>
 - iii. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000711/071135eo.pdf>
(Scroll down to page 6. Note that this report was written in 1952.)
 - iv. <http://repository.unm.edu/handle/1928/7708> (long and challenging read)

4. In light of what they have read, ask students to consider race relations in the modern-day U.S. Ask them to brainstorm their ideas, either individually on paper, or in groups, or as a class. Can they list any specific examples from U.S. History or current events to support their general statements on race relations in the U.S.? (Students might refer back to Essay Question #1.)
5. *Conceptual Challenge*: In discussion or in a class lesson, introduce students to the idea that race is a social construct. In light of what they have learned about race and slavery in the U.S. and Brazil, can they identify any examples of the socially constructed nature of race? (Consider in particular the “black vs. white” soccer game discussed on the Harvard website. Link above.) Ask students to keep in mind as they discuss this topic that although race is socially constructed, the effects of racism are no less real.
6. Essay:
 - a. *Simplified (compare/contrast)*: Ask students to write an essay comparing slavery in the U.S. and Brazil, or comparing modern-day race relations in the U.S. and Brazil.
 - b. *Challenge (Combination compare/contrast and cause/effect)*: In an essay, answer the following question: how has the history of slavery shaped race relations in the U.S. and Brazil? Have differing histories created differing race relations? Have people responded similarly to similar circumstances in these two countries? Can you identify specific aspects of the slave experience in these countries that you believe have created specific modern-day race conditions?

Extension II:

1. Ask students, individually or in groups, to research another historical diaspora. For examples see “This Exhibition Home.” Also consider the Native American diaspora as an example. *To complete this assignment, students will need access to research facilities (library, computers, etc.)*
2. Ask students to organize their research around this central question: why is the historical incident they are studying considered a diaspora? What qualities make it a diaspora? Is there evidence that the people they are studying “yearn for their homeland”?
3. Ask students to present their findings either in the form of a short paper or presentation.