

Charles Shupp
Rural Vs. Urban Slavery
9th and 10th Grade
Summer 2002

RURAL SLAVERY Vs. URBAN SLAVERY IN CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA

**PLUS: A COMPARATIVE LOOK BETWEEN THE CITIES OF CHARLESTON AND
CLEVELAND IN THE TIME OF SLAVERY**

Author

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School

Lincoln-West High School

Course

American History/World History

Grade Level

9th grade/10th grade

Standards Met

Grade 9

Strand 1-4a

Strand 1-7

Strand 1-9

Strand 2-6

Strand 3-3

Grade 10

Strand 1-3b

Strand 1-6

Strand 1-7

Scope

One class period of 40 minutes

Introduction

This lesson will look at slavery in and around Charleston, South Carolina. It will compare urban slavery and rural slavery. It will look at some of the differences and similarities. Furthermore, this lesson will compare and contrast Charleston, South Carolina to Cleveland, Ohio in the time of slavery.

Objectives

Objective 1: Students will be able to describe the typical day of a field slave on a rural plantation. Furthermore, students will be able to describe the work done by a slave who lived on an urban plantation in Charleston.

Objective 2: Students will be able to compare and contrast the life of a rural slave and that of an urban slave and determine which slave had the overall better conditions.

Objective 3: Students will be able to compare and contrast Cleveland, Ohio and Charleston, South Carolina in regards to free persons of color in the period of slavery.

Content Elements/Procedure

Objective 1:

Field Slave

Have students start brainstorming about what a typical day in the life of a rural field slave was like. Write responses on the board. Sift through material on board and start to make a comprehensive list.

Typical Day (depending on the crop)

Before Dawn

Prepared their meals
Fed livestock
Rushed to the fields before sunrise

After the working day

Care for livestock
Put away tools
Cooks meals before horn sounded
bedtime in the quarters

During the Day

Grub and Hoe the field
Pick worms of plants
Build fences
Cut down trees
Construct dikes
Pull fodder
Clear new land
Plant rice, sugar, cotton, tobacco, corn
Harvest the crop

A field slave's day was literally from before sunrise to sunset, a very long and difficult day.

Urban slave

Have students present ideas on the day of an urban plantation slave. Write responses on the board. Begin to make a comprehensive list.

Typical workday of and urban domestic servant

Wake up at 5am

Through out the day:

(Mainly female)

Prepared food

Washed clothes

Cleaned the house

Rendered personal services to the master or mistress

Looked after the children and elderly

Attended to guests

(Mainly male)

Valets for masters

Handled horses and carriages

Cared for the grounds and gardens

Ran errands in the city

End day at curfew

Domestic slaves were always on duty at the beck and call of the master or mistress. There were no days off not even on Sundays.

Many urban slaves enjoyed more opportunity (especially men) to mingle in the city on their errands for the master or mistress.

However, domestic slaves were always in more contact with their masters.

Objective 2:

Taking the knowledge learned in Objective 1, create a list on the board comparing the two. Have students infer which slave might have had it better overall. Ask for reasons why.

Possible answers:

Urban slaves had it better because they didn't work in the fields, had a little sense of freedom, had better clothes, and better food.

Field slaves might have had it better because they were not in contact with their masters as much. They were able to develop a black community centered on the slave quarters away from the master's house.

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Objective 3:

Cleveland vs. Charleston

Have students begin to list occupations that could be held by free persons of color in Charleston and in Cleveland

Charleston

Carpenters
Bricklayers
Painters
Blacksmiths
Tailors
Hotel Keepers
Tinnerns
Seamen
Ships carpenters

Cleveland

Tailors
Provision store owners
Tin manufacturers
Grocery owners
Music teacher
Teachers in a day school
Land lords
Physicians

There were a variety of jobs available to free persons of color in Charleston as well in Cleveland.

**Differences: Physicians in Cleveland
Teachers in Cleveland**

**Ship carpenters in Charleston
Seamen**

In both areas free persons of color had a lot of occupation options. However, both were still limited in some respects due to black codes enforced on the free black population. However, in both cities the codes were not strictly enforced.

In both cities, black communities were able to develop and grow which survive into this day.

Close:

Despite the fact that free persons of color in Charleston had a variety of occupations to choose from, there were still many thousands in the city enslaved. Their population

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numbered well into the thousands. In Cleveland, a free city, the black population never numbered as much as it did in Charleston. Most African Americans lived outside the city proper in Cleveland in the area known as Rockport now known as Lakewood.

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Ways to enhance extend beyond the classroom

Take a virtual tour of a plantation.

Have students do oral interviews of grandparents to find out where they originated (tie into a Charleston/Cleveland connection)

Take a trip to Charleston

Bibliography

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Meffort, John, Sherman Pyatt. *Charleston, South Carolina*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

Pap, Michael S, ed. *Ethnic Communities in Cleveland*. Cleveland, OH: John Carroll University, 1973.

Vlach, John M. *Back of the Big House*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Appendix

This lesson is self-contained. No outside images are needed unless the teacher would like to add images.

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