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NICK HELPS LESSON PLAN *on*

BLACK HISTORY: 13TH AMENDMENT

Created in partnership with **Dr. LaGarrett King**, Founder of the Carter Center for K-12 Black History Education, and **Dr. Brianne Pitts**, Carter Center Affiliate

The 13th Amendment is an addition to the Constitution of the United States of America. Congress ratified it in 1865 after the Civil War. The 13th Amendment ended chattel slavery and involuntary servitude (except if you were convicted of a crime) in the United States of America. While the federal government passed a law to end slavery (which lasted almost 250 years) that freed nearly 4 million African Americans, we cannot forget the many African Americans, both freed and enslaved, who sought to end slavery through activism and serving in the Union army. The 13th Amendment, along with the 14th and 15th Amendments, was the constitutional solution to expand African Americans' civil rights.

This one day lesson encourages students to explore how freedom came to be, who fought for it and what freedom means to themselves and to those who came before them.

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13TH AMENDMENT LESSON OUTLINE

What did the 13th Amendment mean to Black Americans Seeking Freedom in the United States?

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be free?
2. How did Black Americans fight for their freedoms prior to the 13th Amendment?
3. What can we learn from the 13th Amendment?

INQUIRY DESCRIPTION

Developed for 3rd–5th graders, this 45–60 minute (one class-period) lesson leads students through a role play into Black Americans' fight for freedoms in the United States with attention to the passage of The 13th Amendment. A detailed explanation of this inquiry and supporting resources (key materials, vocabulary, and people) is attached.

STANDARDS

Teaching Hard History American Slavery: EK #1: Students should be encouraged to think and talk about the meaning of freedom.

NCSS Themes (2) Time, Continuity, and Change & (5) Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Activate (10 min.):
Introduce the compelling question and prepare students for the inquiry, building purpose and shared vocabulary. This segment addresses supporting question 1: What does it mean to be free?

Engage (25 min.):
Students role play as Abolitionist Meeting attendees, Black Americans who fought for and won their freedom against all odds. Through discussion and introduction to multiple stories of Black agency and resistance, students stretch their understanding of the meaning of freedoms to different groups and individuals in the United States. This segment addresses Supporting Question 2: How did Black Americans fight for their freedoms prior to the 13th Amendment?

Apply (15 min.):
Students review the text of the 13th Amendment, reading closely. The teacher prompts students to consider American ideals of Freedom, the realities of Black oppression in our history, and how the passage of the 13th Amendment changed the meaning of freedom for millions of Americans. This segment addresses the supporting question: What can we learn from the 13th Amendment?

Assess (10 min.):
Taking their experiences from the mixer, and close reading of the Amendment into account, students write a passage in answer to the compelling question: What did the 13th Amendment mean to Black Americans Seeking Freedom in the United States?

Extend:
In the days following this inquiry, revisit your discussion of freedom and Black agency, resistance, and joy.

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE INQUIRY

This is a fast-paced single day (45–60 minutes) lesson that asks students to question their ideas of freedom and how it was won for all Americans.

After discussing students' experience of freedom, you'll invite them to investigate the resistance, agency, and sacrifices made by Black Americans fighting for their freedoms prior to passage of the 13th Amendment. After a role play simulation, students will revise their thinking about freedoms in America, and finally, will read the 13th Amendment closely. The culminating task asks students to write a paragraph explaining the impact of the Amendments' passage on Black Americans' freedoms.

A pacing guide, list of procedures, and resource links are provided below.

ACTIVATE (5–10 MIN.)

Introduce the compelling question and prepare students for the inquiry, building purpose and shared vocabulary. This segment addresses **Supporting Question 1: What does it mean to be free?**

- Prompt classroom discussion by introducing the supporting question: **What does it mean to be free? (Or what does freedom mean?)**
- Make a quick chart of students' responses (as simple as a bullet-pointed list).
- Introduce the compelling question **What did the 13th Amendment mean to Black Americans Seeking Freedom in the United States?**
- Invite students to consider how these questions are related. Continue facilitating discussion, asking additional questions where necessary: Were these freedoms always a part of American Democracy? Why not? How might an amendment help to rectify this? It is appropriate to leave these questions unanswered, as you will amend and co-construct responses as the inquiry continues.
- As students respond to teacher prompting, discuss key vocabulary and develop (with the students) definitions for terms: Amendment and Freedom.

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AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE INQUIRY

ENGAGE (15–25 MIN.):

Students role play as Abolitionist Meeting attendees, Black Americans who fought for and won their freedom against all odds. Through discussion and introduction to multiple stories of Black agency and resistance, students stretch their understanding of the meaning of freedoms to different groups and individuals in the United States. This segment addresses **Supporting Question 2: How did Black Americans fight for their freedoms prior to the 13th Amendment?**

1. **Introduce the role play (3 min.):** Today we'll be attending an Abolitionist meeting, and learning from the experiences of the Black Americans who were enslaved and fought for their freedoms prior to the passage of the 13th Amendment. While we mingle, we will take on the roles of "attendees" at this event, we will portray one of these freedom seekers, while we consider the question: **How did Black Americans fight for their freedoms prior to the 13th Amendment?**

   In this and all portions of the inquiry: You may choose to have students work independently, in pairs, or in small groups when you assign ROLES. If online, you may share the document of passages with the students and assign a role to each. You will need break out rooms in zoom or another platform to easily facilitate the students "mingling." If you would like every student to take on a role, multiple students can represent each person. It is ideal that more than one person take on each freedom seeker's story, so that many students hear and learn from their experience.

2. **Instruct students to read their roles (5 min.)**, study their person's fight for freedom, and ask questions of the teacher or peers to better understand the passage before sharing. Remind the class that once the role play "meeting" begins, they'll introduce their freedom seeker to their classmates as if they were meeting for the first time, they will ask how their peers sought their freedom and share the stories and experiences of their role in return.

3. **Begin the meeting (10 min. total).** This interactive "event" asks students (whether socially distanced, or online) to play the role of a Black American who fought for and won their freedoms from enslavement. Representing their role, students mingle, or zoom with peers, introducing themselves, and sharing the Black American's story of freedom and resistance, spending 2–3 minutes with another student (or group) before being prompted to move on and meet someone new. Mingle until students have had the opportunity to meet 2–3 others.

4. As students meet (in person or online), remind students to respectfully reiterate key details about their abolitionist. You may wish to have them document what they hear and learn as they mingle.

5. **Debrief as class (7 min.)**, invite students to return to their seats or the main room online. With students' assistance, amend your chart of freedoms to include a list of the ways African Americans fought for their freedoms prior to passage of the 13th Amendment. The list may include: escape, fight back, purchase their freedom, resist oppression, and more.

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AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE INQUIRY

APPLY (15–20 MIN.):
Students review the text of the 13th Amendment, reading closely. The teacher prompts students to consider American ideals of Freedom, the realities of Black oppression in our history, and how the passage of the 13th Amendment changed the meaning of freedom for millions of Americans. This segment addresses the **Supporting Question 3: What can we learn from the 13th Amendment?**

1. Gather students back at their desks, and hand out a copy of this primary source.
2. Invite students to reflect on the document, annotating and taking notes as you read aloud (5 min.). As you read, invite students to take notes and carefully observe the document.
3. Following the first reading of the document, the teacher may extend the review (5 min.) using prompts that include (adapted from Library of Congress Primary Source questions): ***Observe***—What do you notice?; ***Reflect***—What do you think made this document necessary?; and ***Question***—How do you feel about this document? Why?
4. After some time for writing and reflection (5 min.), you'll invite students to apply what they've learned, discussing their response (partners, small groups or whole class) to Supporting Question 3: **What can we learn from the 13th Amendment?**

ASSESS (10–15 MIN.):
Taking their experiences from the meeting, and close reading of the Amendment into account, students write a passage in answer to the compelling question: **What did the 13th Amendment mean to Black Americans Seeking Freedom in the United States?**

Extension: Now that you've considered the importance of freedom, the multiple experiences of black American freedom fighters, and the legislation that made freedom from enslavement a part of our American Constitution, how can you continue the work of fighting for freedom in the United States?

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE INQUIRY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It will be helpful to determine your students' readiness for this inquiry. Many outstanding children's books have been written about the fight for Black Americans' freedoms, and these resources can be used to front-load this lesson. You may also wish to use read alouds to assess your students' understanding of key terms and ideas about enslavement and the fight for freedoms leading up to the 13th Amendment. Additional vocabulary and audio visual resources have been added for teacher's professional development (not necessarily student facing).

- **BOOK LISTS:** Slavery, Resistance and Reparations: Social Justice Books
- TIMELINE**:** Teachers may wish to create of a timeline to support this inquiry
- **VOCABULARY:** Visit the following sources for more information on the language of enslavement and other key vocabulary NPS (2020), Telling the story
- Develop your understanding of methods for teaching history through Black Historical Consciousness (King, 2020)

TEACHER BACKGROUND

TIMELINE OF RELATED EVENTS

August 20, 1619
The first enslaved Africans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia.

April 12, 1861
Civil War Begins.

January 1, 1863
Emancipation Proclamation.

January 31, 1865
The 13th Amendment passed.

June 2, 1865
The Civil War Ends.

June 19, 1865
The last of the formerly enslaved in Texas receive news of their freedom. This date is known as Juneteenth.

December 18, 1865
The 13th Amendment ratified by the required 27 of the then 36 states and proclaimed on December 18.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

This Role Play invites students to read and discuss the experiences of the formerly enslaved Black Americas who fought for their freedoms* as attendees at an Abolitionist's meeting.

After reading about their freedom fighter ROLES, students will work independently or in teams to introduce their peers to these courageous and resilient Black Americans. After meeting many other freedom seekers, students will discuss the risks, rewards, and agency of the Black Americans who fought for their freedoms prior to the passage of the 13th Amendment in answer to the Supporting Question: **What did "freedom" look like before the 13th Amendments' passage?**

MEET THE PARTICIPANTS

- **William Henry Johnson:** Lawyer, Janitor and Jockey
  Escaped enslavement as runaway by train
- **Hercules Washington:** President Washington's Cook
  Escaped enslavement by fleeing George Washington
- **Ella Sheppard:** Social Reformer, Pianist, and Soprano
  freedom was purchased by her father, nearly killed
- **Philip Reid:** Plasterer who crafted the statue of freedom
  Freed by an Act of Emancipation in D.C.
- **The Edmonson Sisters:** Abolitionists and Freedom Seekers
  Attempted escape by boat to NJ, captured

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out one of the numbered ROLES to each student in class (may substitute a pair or small group of students if preferred). It is OK that there are doubles or triples. Invite students to read the summary, and introduce themselves and their Black American's freedom struggle to their peers in the role play. Students may ask and answer questions using their handout. Students repeat this process every few minutes until they have met the other freedom seekers in the room.

ONLINE VERSION (HYBRID AND DISTANCE LEARNING)

Make a copy of the ROLES document and share with your students, assigning a student or group of students to a particular individual). Students learn about the person's experience, and meet in break out rooms to share. Every 2–3 minutes, close breakout rooms, and re-open new ones to mix up the meeting guests. Students repeat this process until they have met all the freedom seekers in the room.

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* Paragraphs adapted from passages on BlackPast.org—see citations following each narrative.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

STAGE THE ROLE PLAY

Today we'll be attending an Abolitionist meeting, and learning from the experiences of the Black American who were enslaved and fought for their freedoms prior to the passage of the 13th Amendment. While we mingle, we will take on the roles of "attendees" at this event, we will portray one of these freedom seekers, while we consider the question: **How did Black Americans fight for their freedoms prior to the 13th Amendment?**

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STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

ROLE 1: WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON

Adapted from: Ward Jr., R. (2009, September 15) *From the Slave Quarters to the Courtroom: The Story of the First African American Attorney in the United States*. Retrieved from **BlackPast.org**.

William Henry Johnson, one of the first Black Americans to practice law, was born into slavery in Richmond, Virginia on July 16, 1811. He was the property of Andrew Johnson. Small in size, William Henry Johnson became a jockey (a professional horse rider). As a jockey, he had the opportunity to meet former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who were so happy with William's riding they each gave him a tip from their winnings. Because William's owner had a gambling problem, he feared that he or members of his family would be sold to satisfy debts in the future. In 1833 William decided to escape from slavery. With the help of his enslaver's daughter, William and his mother fled the plantation. The enslaver's daughter helped William and his mother get to Richmond where with the winnings from his last race, they booked passage to New York City. Later, after working as a janitor in a law office, William taught himself to read, and became a black legal pioneer whose personal history reflected an improbable rise from the slave quarters to the courtroom.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

ROLE 2: HERCULES WASHINGTON

Adapted from: Momodu, S. (2017, August 06) *Hercules Washington (Enslaved Cook of George Washington) (ca. 1755–?).* Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

Hercules Washington was an enslaved man who became head cook at America's first President, George Washington's, Mount Vernon plantation. Hercules was born around 1755 somewhere in Virginia. In 1789, he was one of nine enslaved Africans President George Washington brought with him to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the time, the national capital. Hercules prepared all of the meals for President Washington, his family, his private and official guests. Despite his special status as Washington's cook, Hercules Washington became one of only a few enslaved people ever to successfully run away from George Washington to secure his freedom. He escaped to freedom in Pennsylvania on March 10, 1797. Some say Hercules escaped to freedom at the end of the Washington presidency when he found he would be made a regular laborer upon returning to Mount Vernon rather than continue as Washington's cook, he decided to run away.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

ROLE 3: ELLA SHEPPARD

Adapted from: Ward, A. (2008, April 26) *Ella Sheppard (1851–1915).* Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

Ella Sheppard, soprano, pianist and activist, was a friend of Frederick Douglass, and one of the most well-known African American women of her generation. Ella was born a slave in 1851 on Andrew Jackson's plantation. When Ella was a little girl, her enslaved mother threatened to drown she and Ella if their owners refused to allow Ella's father (a freed man) to purchase their freedom. An elderly enslaved person prevented the murder, predicting that *"the Lord would have need of that child."* Eventually their enslavers refused to free them both, but allowed Ella to go with her father, who soon remarried and, fearful he and his daughter might be re-enslaved, fled penniless to Ohio.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

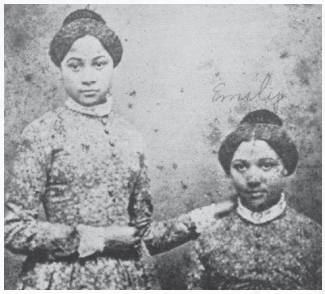
ROLE 4: PHILIP REID

Adapted from: Agyeman, K. (2013, December 05) *Philip Reid (1820–1892).* Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

Craftsman **Philip Reid** is the most famous of the enslaved workers who built the United States Senate and House of Representatives. He worked on the casting of the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol building. Born a slave in South Carolina around 1820, Reid was purchased during his youth by an ironworker who recognized Reid's skills and included him as an essential part of his construction team. Reid worked on the Statue of Freedom from July 1, 1860 to May 16, 1861. He worked weeks without a break and without pay. Reid finally received his freedom, not because of his work on the statue but because all enslaved people in the District of Columbia were liberated by the Compensated Emancipation Act. The Act freed Reid and 3,185 other enslaved black District residents. December 2, 2008, 116 years after his death, Congress officially recognized the efforts of Reid and other enslaved laborers of the U.S. Capitol by constructing Emancipation Hall which serves as the entry to the Capitol Visitors Center. The Hall contains the original plaster model that Reid used for the Statue of Freedom.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

ROLE 4: MARY & EMILY EDMONSON



Adapted from: Momodu, S. (2016, September 28) *The Edmonson Sisters (1832–1895).* Retrieved from **BlackPast.org**.

Mary Edmonson (1832–1853) and **Emily Edmonson** (1835–1895) were enslaved African Americans who became prominent in the United States abolitionist (anti-slavery) movement after gaining their freedom. In 1848, they were among the 77 enslaved who tried to escape from Washington, D.C. to New Jersey (a free state) on the schooner The Pearl. On April 15, 1848, the sisters joined what was the largest escape attempt by enslaved people in U.S. history. A posse organized by Washington, D.C. area slave owners captured The Pearl on Chesapeake Bay at Point Lookout, Maryland, and towed the ship back to Washington, D.C. The Edmonson sisters and the other 75 enslaved persons were sold and sent to New Orleans. Meanwhile, their father continued his campaign to free his daughters. The enslavers demanded $2,250 for their release, Edmonson pleaded with Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent abolitionist who was convinced to raise funds to purchase the girls and free them.

STUDENT ROLES: BLACK AMERICANS SEEKING FREEDOM

ROLE 4: ANNA MARIA WEEMS

Adapted from: Nielsen, E. (2016, March 19) *Anna Maria Weems (1840–?).* Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

Anna Maria Weems is best known as an enslaved person who gained her freedom with a daring escape from slavery. Weems was born into slavery about 1840 in Maryland. When her parents learned the family was to be separated and sold off into slavery, they began working closely with abolitionists to emancipate each enslaved member of their family. While they were able to purchase some members of the family, it was clear Weems would have to escape if she wished to be free. After one owner died, and another sold her, fifteen-year old Weems ran away from Montgomery County and made her way to Washington, D.C. After 6 weeks of hiding in an underground railroad safe house, she was able to travel escape to Canada.

THE 13TH AMENDMENT

The 13th Amendment was a monumental revision to the Constitution, abolishing involuntary servitude and enslavement forever in the United States. This Amendment took America one step closer to the freedoms promised to all in our Constitution and the First Amendment.

The passage of the 13th Amendment ended the enslavement of people in the border states that remained after the Emancipation Proclamation, which only freed the enslaved in the states that seceded, not the ones under Northern control.

AMENDMENT XIII

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

SECTION 1.
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly, appropriately, convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

SECTION 2.
Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

NOTE: A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th Amendment.

SOURCE: BlackPast, B. (2007, January 21) (1865) Reconstruction Amendments, 1865–1870. Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

KEY TERMS

Abolish:
To formally end/get rid of (a system, practice, or institution).

Involuntary servitude:
Being forced to work for someone else against your will, without pay or other benefit. Slavery can be a form of involuntary servitude.

Jurisdiction:
The power to make legal decisions and judgments.

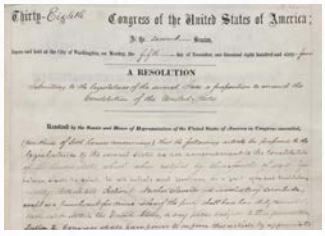
Slavery:
The process of enslaving a person, where the person is treated as property, and forced to work without pay.

THE 13TH AMENDMENT
STUDENT NOTECATCHER

Name: Date:

What does freedom mean to me? Write and/or draw your ideas below.

What was the 13th Amendment?


Thirty-Eighth Congress of the United States of America;

A RESOLUTION

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

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Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly, appropriately, convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

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SOURCE: BlackPast, B. (2007, January 21) (1865) Reconstruction Amendments, 1865–1870. Retrieved from BlackPast.org.

What freedoms did the 13th Amendment extend? To whom? & Why?

THE 13TH AMENDMENT
STUDENT NOTECATCHER

How did discussing the 13th Amendment cause me to extend or revise my thinking about freedoms in the United States?

TAKE ACTION

With this new understanding of the The 13th Amendment, you've been invited to teach others what you've learned. Write a paragraph for your social studies textbook answering the question: **What did the 13th Amendment mean to those Seeking Freedom in the United States?**