



Doc Edwards

## **Supplemental Lesson Plan: WPA Slave Narratives – A Study**

**In this lesson for grade 8, students will examine three short narratives of formerly enslaved people from Stagville plantation near Durham. These narratives were part of the Federal Writers’ Project during the Roosevelt Administration and the Works Progress Administration of the New Deal. Students will use critical thinking skills to understand information in context.**

### **Competency Goals**

**This lesson can be used in partial fulfillment of the following:**

NCSCOS Social Studies grade 8: 4.03; 4.04; 4.05  
NCSCS Language Arts: 1.02; 2.01; 3.01; 4.01

### **Objectives**

After classroom discussion, historical background reading and examining the WPA slave narratives, students will:

- analyze a primary source document for context, historical accuracy, and cultural influences.
- understand the circumstances of the collection of the slave narratives and how those circumstances may have affected the information given.
- identify attitudes and emotions of the formerly enslaved people held by Paul Cameron.

## Teacher Planning

Provide the following materials either through web access to *The North Carolina Civil War Experience* or through downloaded handouts.

**Site Narratives -** A Brief History of Stagville Plantation  
Architecture as Primary Source: Horton Grove and  
the Great Barn

**Article - *Reading Slave Narratives: The WPA Interviews*** by David  
Walbert at <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-eg/5355>.

**Article - *Reading Primary Sources: An Introduction for Students*** by  
Kathryn Walbert at [http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/thinking-  
guide-slave-narrative/745](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/thinking-guide-slave-narrative/745)

**Library of Congress (LOC) Teaching with Primary Sources: Analysis Tool**  
[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary  
\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf)

**K-W-L Chart** - if desired (attached)

**Glossary** of terms found in the primary source

## Time Requirement

1-2 class periods for activity if preparatory reading is done for homework.

## Bell Ringer Activity

Ask students to brainstorm ideas about what types of evidence they leave behind that record their lives? What types of historical records of their activities have they left in the past 24 hours?

## Teacher Input

- A. Teachers should familiarize themselves with the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. Two good sources for this are the Library of Congress *Introduction to WPA Slave Narratives* at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snintro00.html> and the Learn NC article - *Reading Slave Narratives: The WPA Interviews* by David Walbert at <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-eg/5355>.

A Teachers' Guide to the LOC primary source analysis tool can be found at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/AnalyzingOralHistories.pdf>. This guide will assist teachers in leading class discussion on reading slave narratives and what questions to ask.

- B. Teachers should introduce students to the WPA slave narratives and explain when, how, and why these interviews were conducted. Teachers should also explain that the idiomatic language, dialect, and, in some cases, offensive language that can be found in these narratives and needs to be read in historical context. Two articles that may be helpful are *Reading Primary Sources: An Introduction for Students* by Kathryn Walbert <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/thinking-guide-slave-narrative/745> and the LOC entry, *A Note on the language of WPA Slave Narratives* at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snlang.html>

## Classroom Activities: Guided Practice

1. Students should read the articles on the WPA Federal Writers' Project and *Reading Primary Sources: An Introduction for Students* as homework in preparation for the lesson. Conduct a class discussion about slave narratives and the language of the slave narratives, so students are prepared before reading the narratives themselves.
2. Divide the class into small groups or pair students for the reading activity on the Stagville slave narratives. Each group or pair should be given one of the three following narratives to read.

LOC – slave narrative of Abner Jordan [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=112/mesn112.db&recNum=37&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem\\_Ho5h::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=112/mesn112.db&recNum=37&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem_Ho5h::)  
(pages 34-36)

LOC – Slave Narrative of Doc Edwards [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=299&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem\\_edOB::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=299&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem_edOB::)  
(pages 295-297)

LOC- Slave Narrative of Cy Hart [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=383&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem\\_OBzB::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=383&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem_OBzB::)

(pages 379-381)

## Classroom Activities: Independent Practice

1. Allow students 20-30 minutes to analyze the narrative using the LOC Teaching with Primary Sources Analysis Tool or the K-W-L chart. Provide questions from the LOC teachers' guide to focus their inquiry. Students can use the Learn NC article they previously read to focus their analysis as well.
2. Ask one group for each narrative to summarize their analysis for the class. Ask other groups that read the same narrative for further input.

## Closure

Conclude the lesson by having a general classroom discussion answering the following questions:

- a. What did these narratives tell you about slavery at Stagville before the Civil War?
- b. What events were described?
- c. Did you believe everything that you read in your specific assignment? If so, why? If not, why?
- d. What similarities in these accounts did you notice? What differences?
- e. What, if any, information was given about life after emancipation?

## Assessment

Going back to the Bell Ringer Activity, students should have a better understanding of what is meant by **primary source** and **historical record**. Ask students to write an essay describing what a future student 150 years from now could learn about today's students' individual lives based on the historical record they are currently producing.

## **For Further Study: Related lesson plans from Learn NC**

**In introduction to slave narratives: Harriet Jacobs' *Life of a Slave Girl***

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2882?ref=search>

**Lunsford Lane: A slave in North Carolina who buys his freedom**

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2879?ref=search>

**Plantation life in the 1840s: A slave's description**

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2859?ref=search>

**Slavery across North Carolina**

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1919?ref=search>

**Perspective on the Slave Narrative**

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/perspective-slave-narrative>

## K-W-L Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>K</b> <i>What I Know</i>	<b>W</b> <i>What I Want To Learn</i>	<b>L</b> <i>What I Have Learned</i>