

NYS Abolition through Data Analysis

New York State Abolition Lessons
Lehman Center for American History

Learning Goals

Skills: Students will practice analyzing and interpreting data from the Northeast Slavery Records Index (NESRI) and consider how to form historical research questions from quantitative material.

Content: Students will understand that data sets present opportunities and limitations, especially as they relate to the history of slavery, and they will see how historians can use data to develop research questions.

Materials and Resources

- **Required:** NYS Abolition through Data Analysis Student Handout (on LCAH website)
- **Optional:** Additional resources that are not listed in the following lesson but that could be included if you'd like to modify the plan based on your class's needs
 - [Slave Voyages website](#)
 - Original documents that help us see where data comes from:
 - New York County - [Michael Pappan](#), 1819 (log)

Activities Summary

Warmup (15 mins)

- Introduce that today we'll be learning about data related to slavery in New York
- Activate prior knowledge of slavery (through pair-share, free write, or another similar activity that works for your class)
- Using [Mentimeter](#) or another similar website, activate prior knowledge about data: How do you define data? What kinds of data would you want to know about enslaved people? How is data helpful when thinking about slavery, and how could it be a hindrance?
- Teacher complements student responses with broad context:
 - Slaveowners, investors, government officials, and ship captains often kept track of the people they enslaved
 - They logged names, sometimes age, sometimes gender, and other demographics
 - They recorded this information in ship records, plantation ledgers, title deeds, and other documents
 - Historians and other researchers have compiled this material into data sets

- These data sets give us a high-level understanding of slavery in the US, across the world, and, for us, New York State and New York City

Activity: Jigsaw (35 mins)

- Split students into three groups
- Each group takes a set of charts/tables and moves through the worksheet together
- After approximately 20 minutes, form new groups that include one representative from each original group and have students teach each other what they learned from these charts/tables

Closing (10 mins)

- In the large group, what are our takeaways? How have our ideas about data collection as it relates to enslaved people changed since the start of the lesson? What were some research questions you developed?
 - Could also do this as an exit ticket
- HW: Pick one of your questions and sharpen it. What sources would you need to answer this question? What makes this question interesting and important?