

NYS Abolition with Primary Sources

New York State Abolition Lessons
Lehman Center for American History

This lesson is designed for students who have some prior knowledge about the history of slavery and/or slavery in New York state. You may find useful supplementary material in our other lesson plans or in the “Additional Primary Sources” document.

In addition, you may wish to substitute various primary source documents with the ones listed above based on your class’ needs. While we have tried to curate age-appropriate primary sources, we always recommend speaking with your students about approaching this topic and historical language with sensitivity.

Learning Goals

Skills: Students will sharpen their critical thinking skills by exploring primary sources. In doing so, they will consider the importance of bias and perspective.

Content: Students will learn about the opportunities and limitations of various types of primary sources and better understand various aspects of slavery in New York.

Materials and Resources

- NYS Abolition with Primary Sources Student Handout
- [Runaway Slave Ad #1](#)
- [Runaway Slave Ad #2](#)
- Primary Source A (Proposal for Antislavery Newspaper) - displayed below
- Primary Source B (Manumission Document) - displayed below
- OPTIONAL: You might find excerpts of these narratives to be useful primary sources to complement or replace the ones listed above
 - [Life of William Grimes](#) (1825)
 - [Narratives of Colored Americans](#) (1875)

Activities Summary

Warmup (10 mins)

- Through pair-share, free write, [Mentimeter](#), or another means, activate students’ prior knowledge by asking them to consider the following questions:
 - What is a primary source?
 - What are some examples of primary sources?

- What do we gain from primary sources?
- After gathering some responses, let students know you'll be discussing primary sources related to slavery in New York today. What are some types of primary sources you think could be revealing, and why?

Activity #1: Pair-Square Runaway Slave Ads (25 mins)

- Split students into pairs. Half of the class' pairs analyze Runaway Slave Ad #1, and the other half analyzes Runaway Slave Ad #2 using the NYS Abolition with Primary Sources Student Handout
- After around 10 minutes, each pair joins another pair that reviewed the opposite (to form a square) and discusses what they learned, using Handout
- Discuss takeaways as a class

Activity #2: Independently Analyze Additional Primary Source (15 mins)

- Students select one of the two primary sources (displayed below) to analyze and begin to write a paragraph conveying the following information:
 - What is the document?
 - Why was this document created? Can you tell who created it?
 - What does the document tell us? What does it conceal?
 - What stands out to you about the document? (Maybe language or certain ideas conveyed...)
 - What are 1-2 questions it provokes for you?

Closing (10 mins)

- Hear a paragraph (or students' initial thoughts) about each of the sources
- Discuss as a class: What can different types of primary sources tell us? Whose voices can we hear, and whose do we not? What are the benefits of primary sources and what do we have to be aware of when using them?
- HW: Finish their paragraphs

PROSPECTUS
FOR AN ANTI-SLAVERY PAPER, TO BE ENTITLED
NORTH STAR.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Proposes to publish, in ROCHESTER, N. Y., a **WEEKLY ANTI-SLAVERY PAPER**, with the above title.

The object of the **NORTH STAR** will be to attack **SLAVERY** in all its forms and aspects; advocate **UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION**; exalt the standard of **PUBLIC MORALITY**; promote the Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the **COLORED PEOPLE**; and hasten the day of **FREEDOM** to the Three Millions of our **ENSLAVED FELLOW COUNTRYMEN**.

The Paper will be printed upon a double medium sheet, at \$2,00 per annum, if paid in advance, or \$2,50, if payment be delayed over six months.

The names of Subscribers may be sent to the following named persons, and should be forwarded, as far as practicable, by the first of November, proximo.

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My Dear Gay. I thank you for the several Subscribers
you have sent me - and the interest you take in my
hazardous enterprise. Your good wishes are highly
appreciated. One of the most discouraging forms of
opposition which I meet is the fear of my friends - some
of whom - draw quaint pictures of starvation - and predict
that I am soon to be victimized! It may be even so.
Yours Ever. F. Douglass

**By Jacob Radcliff Mayor, and Richard Riker
Recorder, of the City of New-York,**

It is hereby Certified, That pursuant to the
statute in such case made and provided, we have this day ex-
amined *on* certain *male* _____
Negro Slave named *George* _____
the property of *John D. Lang* _____

which slave *is* about to be manumitted, and *he* appearing
to us to be under forty-five years of age, and of sufficient
ability to provide *for himself* we have granted
this Certificate, this *twenty fourth* day of *April* in the
year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and *seventeen*

Jacob Radcliff

R. Riker

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