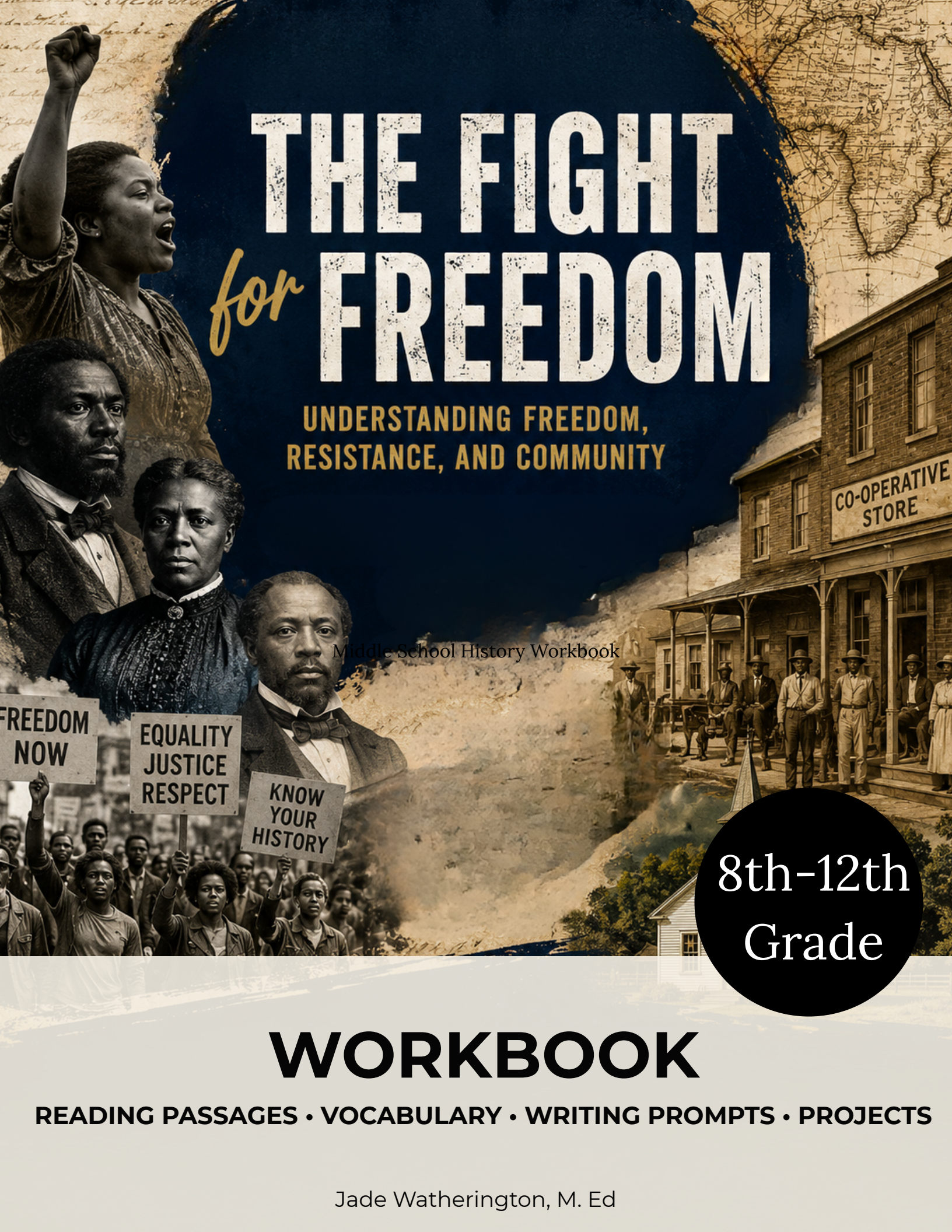




THE FIGHT *for* FREEDOM

UNDERSTANDING FREEDOM,
RESISTANCE, AND COMMUNITY

Middle School History Workbook

FREEDOM
NOW

EQUALITY
JUSTICE
RESPECT

KNOW
YOUR
HISTORY

8th-12th
Grade

WORKBOOK

READING PASSAGES • VOCABULARY • WRITING PROMPTS • PROJECTS

Jade Watherington, M. Ed

The Fight for Freedom: Understanding Freedom, Resistance and Community

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About This Workbook

This workbook introduces learners to the lives of Black revolutionaries, freedom fighters, and community builders who shaped history through courage, leadership, and determination.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the historical information presented in this workbook. Historical interpretations may evolve as new evidence becomes available. Parents, educators, and learners are encouraged to consult additional sources and engage in thoughtful discussion about the topics presented.

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Note to Parents and Educators

This unit is designed to introduce youth to key ideas they will need throughout the workbook: freedom, resistance, community building, and historical thinking. The goal is to help learners understand that history is not just a list of events, but the story of people making choices, facing challenges, and shaping their communities.

Some of the topics in this workbook include difficult parts of history. These moments are included because they help learners understand how and why people resisted injustice, and how communities were built, harmed, and rebuilt over time. Care has been taken to present information in a developmentally appropriate way for middle school learners.

Learners will be encouraged to think critically, ask questions, and consider multiple perspectives. Discussions should focus on understanding historical context, analyzing evidence, and recognizing patterns across time rather than memorizing isolated facts.

We recommend that educators and parents preview lessons in advance, allow space for questions, and create an environment where learners feel comfortable discussing complex historical themes with respect and curiosity.

The purpose of this unit is not only to teach history, but to help learners develop skills in reading, thinking, and understanding the world around them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jade Weatherington'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the beginning and a wavy line extending to the right.

Jade Weatherington, M.Ed

Author's Note

The idea for this workbook came after I saw numerous social media posts where people proudly declared, "I am not my ancestors."

Each time I saw those words, I felt frustrated. I often responded by reminding people that they were, in fact, their ancestors, just without nearly the same challenges, obstacles, courage, or strength that many of those ancestors had been forced to develop. I could not understand how someone could so easily dismiss the people who endured slavery, displacement, violence, discrimination, and countless other hardships while continuing to fight for themselves, their families, and future generations. After my initial anger passed, I realized something important: many people simply do not know these stories.

Most people only know what they have been taught. If schools, books, and media focus primarily on oppression while leaving out stories of resistance, leadership, innovation, and community-building, how could we expect people to know differently?

When I majored in African and African American History, along with English and World History, I quickly realized how many stories had been left out of the curriculum. In fact, I did not learn about many of the individuals, communities, and events included in this workbook until I took a college course called Literature of the Rebellion. That course sparked a deeper curiosity that led me to continue researching and learning long after the semester ended.

Several years ago, I began working on a book about Black resistance and community-building. However, as I reflected on my own experiences as a student, I remembered how bored I often felt when history was reduced to memorizing names, dates, and facts for a test. History came alive when I could connect with the people behind the events, imagine their choices, and understand why their actions mattered. That realization led me to create a workbook instead.

This workbook is not intended to be a complete history. It is only a small glimpse into the countless acts of resistance, resilience, leadership, and community-building that have taken place across the United States and around the world. My hope is that these stories inspire curiosity and encourage young people to continue exploring the people and places that shaped history.

Within these pages, you will meet individuals who challenged injustice, communities that created opportunities where none seemed possible, and families who persevered through extraordinary circumstances. Their stories remind us that history is not only about what happened to people. It is also about what people did in response. My hope is that by the end of this workbook, young readers will not only know these stories, but will feel proud to say:

"I am my ancestors."

Unit 1: Foundations of Freedom

Understanding Freedom, Resistance, and Community

What Is Freedom?

Imagine you could not choose where you live, what you learn, or what work you do.
How would your life feel different?

Marcus stared out the window as other children walked down the road laughing and talking. He wished he could join them, but he knew he couldn't. Every morning, Marcus woke up before the sun. He didn't choose what time to get up. He didn't choose where he worked. He didn't choose what he learned or where he went. Someone else made those decisions for him.

As he watched the children disappear around the corner, Marcus wondered what it would be like to make his own choices.

What would it feel like to decide where to live?

What would it feel like to choose a job?

What would it feel like to go to school and learn to read any book he wanted?

For many people throughout history, these were not simple choices. Freedom was something they did not have.

Freedom means having the ability to make decisions about your own life. It includes the right to learn, work, speak, worship, travel, and pursue your goals. While many people today think of these rights as normal, millions of people throughout history had to fight to gain them. When freedom was denied, people found ways to resist. Some spoke out against unfair laws. Some organized communities where people could support one another. Some taught others to read and write. Others risked their lives in pursuit of freedom.

Many individuals and communities have worked across time to expand these freedoms. Some used writing, speeches, and organizing. Others built schools, businesses, and communities. Some resisted unfair systems through direct action or escape.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is freedom in your own words?
2. List three examples of freedom from the passage.
3. Why do people fight for freedom?
4. What are two ways people can work toward change?

Freedom can include:

- The right to speak and express ideas
- The right to learn and receive education
- The right to earn money and own property
- The right to vote and participate in government
- The right to live safely and with dignity

THINK DEEPER

Why do you think freedom is important in everyday life?
Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Definition
Freedom	A. A group of people living together
Resistance	B. Standing against unfair treatment
Community	C. The ability to make choices about your life
Oppression	D. Unfair control or treatment

Different Forms of Resistance

Soraya looked around the classroom and noticed something wasn't fair. The school library had hundreds of books, but many of them did not include stories about people who looked like her or came from her community. Most people walked past the shelves without thinking about it. Soraya could have done the same. Instead, she decided to speak with her teacher. She gathered a list of books that represented different cultures and experiences. She wrote a letter explaining why these stories mattered and asked if the library could add them to its collection.

Soraya did not lead a march. She did not stand in front of a crowd. She simply saw a problem and took action to make things better. This is one example of resistance.

When many people hear the word resistance, they imagine large protests, speeches, or dramatic moments in history. While those are forms of resistance, resistance can also happen in smaller ways. It happens whenever people challenge unfair treatment, speak up for themselves or others, or work to create positive change.

Not every act of resistance changes the world overnight. Sometimes change begins with one person asking a question, sharing an idea, or refusing to accept unfair treatment. Resistance can be loud or quiet. It can happen in public or in everyday life. All forms of resistance show the desire for change and fairness.

Describe a time when you saw or experienced something unfair. What did people do about it, and what could resistance look like in that situation?

People resist in many ways:

- Learning when education is limited
- Starting businesses or schools
- Writing books, letters, or speeches
- Organizing communities
- Voting or advocating for rights
- Escaping unsafe conditions
- Speaking out against unfair laws

Resistance can be loud or quiet. It can happen in public or in everyday life. All forms of resistance show the desire for change and fairness.

Activity: Review this Chart

Type of Resistance	Description	Example
Cultural Resistance	Preserving traditions, stories, language, or identity	Writing a newspaper
Economic Resistance	Using money, business ownership, or work to create change	Starting a business
Political Resistance	Working to change laws, policies, or government actions	Organizing a protest
Educational Resistance	Gaining or sharing knowledge to create opportunities	Opening a school
Direct Action Resistance	Taking immediate action against oppression or injustice	Escaping oppression

What is Resistance?

Resistance is any action people take to respond to unfair treatment or systems. Resistance can look different depending on the situation. It can involve culture, money, education, politics, or direct action.

Your job:

Use the chart to review the five types of resistance. You will then add your own real world or historical examples on the next page.

Activity: Think Like a Historian

Directions:

For each type of resistance in the chart, you will create your own example in Column 2 and Column 3.

Your examples can come from:
history you have learned
current events or real life situations
school, community, or media examples

Type of Resistance	Description	Example
Cultural Resistance		
Economic Resistance		
Political Resistance		
Educational Resistance		
Direct Action Resistance		

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY STRONG?

What do you think every strong community needs? List at least 4 things.

When Maya's family moved to a new town, she was nervous. Everything felt unfamiliar. She didn't know anyone at her new school, and she worried about making friends.

On her first day, her teacher introduced her to the class and paired her with a student named Jordan. During lunch, a group of learners invited her to sit with them. Later that week, Maya's family attended a community event at a local park where they met neighbors, business owners, and community leaders. As the weeks passed, Maya began to feel at home. She realized that what made the town special wasn't the buildings, roads, or stores. It was the people. The community worked together to help one another, solve problems, and create opportunities for everyone.

A community is more than just a place on a map. It is a group of people connected by shared goals, support, and responsibility. Strong communities are built when people care about one another and work together to meet common needs.

Throughout history, communities have provided important resources such as schools, businesses, places of worship, parks, and community centers. These places help people learn, work, gather, and support one another.

Strong communities often include:

- Schools and education
- Businesses and jobs
- Leaders and organizers
- Places of worship or gathering
- Safety and support systems
- Shared values and goals

Activity: Design Your Community

Draw or describe your ideal community.

Include:

- Schools
- Businesses
- Housing
- Parks or gathering spaces
- Community support systems

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Historians study the past by examining evidence. They do not rely on one story or one source. Instead, they compare many sources to understand what happened.

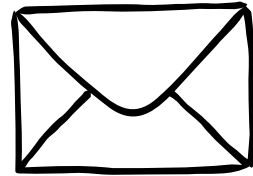
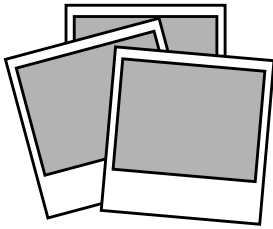
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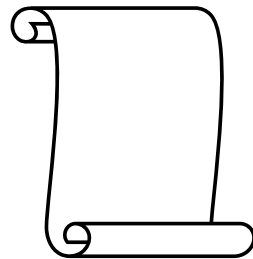
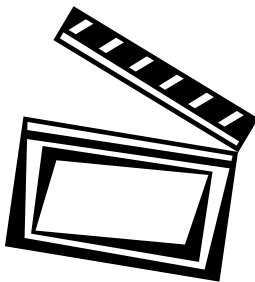
Photographs
Letters
Diaries
Newspapers
Official records

Secondary sources:

Books
Documentaries
Articles

Match the Source





Historians ask questions, compare evidence, and look for patterns in order to understand history more deeply.

UNIT ONE: PROJECT

Create a poster that includes:
What freedom means?
What resistance means?
What makes a strong community?

One question you have about history
Requirements
Use words and visuals
Include at least 3 key vocabulary terms
Be creative and clear

Unit 2: Early Black Revolutionaries

Gaspar Yanga
Toussaint Louverture
Gabriel Prosser
Denmark Vesey
Nat Turner

Gaspar Yanga: Early Fight for Freedom

Who Was Gaspar Yanga?

Gaspar Yanga was an African leader who resisted slavery in what is now Mexico during the late 1500s and early 1600s. He is known for organizing one of the earliest successful maroon communities in the Americas.

Yanga was believed to be of royal African ancestry before being captured and enslaved. He escaped bondage and led a group of runaway enslaved Africans into the mountains of Veracruz, where they created a free settlement.

The Maroon Settlement

Yanga and his followers built a community that survived outside Spanish control for many years. These communities were often called maroon settlements. They relied on farming, trade, and defense strategies to remain independent. The settlement became a symbol of resistance because it proved that enslaved people could successfully create free societies.

Conflict with Spanish Forces

Spanish colonizers saw Yanga's settlement as a threat. They sent military forces to destroy it, but Yanga and his community fought back repeatedly. The resistance lasted for decades. Even though they were outnumbered, the maroons used knowledge of the land and strategic defense to survive attacks.

The Peace Agreement

Eventually, the Spanish government agreed to a peace settlement. The agreement allowed the community to remain free under certain conditions. Yanga's settlement became one of the first legally recognized free Black towns in the Americas. The town of San Lorenzo de los Negros was later renamed Yanga in his honor.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who was Gaspar Yanga and why is he important?
2. What is a maroon settlement?
3. How did Yanga and his community survive attacks?
4. Why did the Spanish consider the settlement a threat?
5. What was the outcome of the conflict?



Estatua de Yanga, Mexico

THINK DEEPER

Imagine you are part of Yanga’s community. Write a journal entry describing a day in the settlement and how it feels to live in a place where you are free.

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Vocabulary Word	Definition
Maroon	A person who escaped slavery and formed independent communities
Resistance	Refusing to accept control or oppression
Settlement	A community where people live and build homes
Colonial	Related to control of land and people by a foreign power

Extension Activities

Choose One

1. Map the region of Veracruz and locate where maroon communities formed
2. Create a poster honoring Gaspar Yanga as a freedom leader
3. Compare Yanga's resistance to another maroon leader in the Caribbean or South America

Toussaint Louverture:

1791 to 1803

The rain had stopped, but the mountains of Saint-Domingue still glistened in the early morning light. Twelve-year-old Luc stood beside his mother as riders hurried down the road carrying news from the north. “Toussaint is coming,” one man called. “The French army is retreating again!”

Luc had heard stories about Toussaint Louverture for years. Older neighbors said he had once been enslaved, but now he led an army fighting for freedom. They said he could read, plan battles, and speak with both soldiers and governors.

By afternoon, the riders reached the village. Dust covered their boots, and their horses were tired, but their faces were bright with hope. One rider held up a paper announcing that enslaved people across the colony would remain free. Luc watched his mother wipe away tears.

“For the first time,” she whispered, “we can imagine a future that belongs to us.”

That evening, villagers gathered around a fire. They spoke of schools, farms, and families that could stay together. No one knew what challenges still lay ahead, but they knew this much: Toussaint Louverture had helped turn a dream of freedom into a real possibility.

Toussaint Louverture was a leader of the Haitian Revolution who played a central role in the fight to end slavery in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti. Born into slavery in the 18th century, he gained his freedom before rising to become a skilled military and political strategist. Louverture led enslaved and free Black people in a successful resistance against French colonial rule, helping to transform the colony into the **first** Black-led republic in the Western Hemisphere. His leadership combined military strength with diplomacy as he worked to stabilize the region and secure lasting freedom. He was eventually captured by French forces and died in prison in 1803, but his legacy continues as a powerful symbol of resistance, independence, and liberation.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who is telling the story through his experience?
2. What news did the riders bring to the village?
3. Why did Luc's mother become emotional?
4. What hopes did the villagers discuss around the fire?

THINK DEEPER

Imagine you are Luc. Write a diary entry describing the day you heard that freedom would be protected. Include what you saw, heard, and felt.

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Revolution	A major change in government or society.
Colony	A territory controlled by another country.
Freedom	The ability to live without being controlled or enslaved.
Leader	A person who guides or directs others.

Extension Activity

On a map of Saint-Domingue, mark:

One mountain region.

One coastal city.

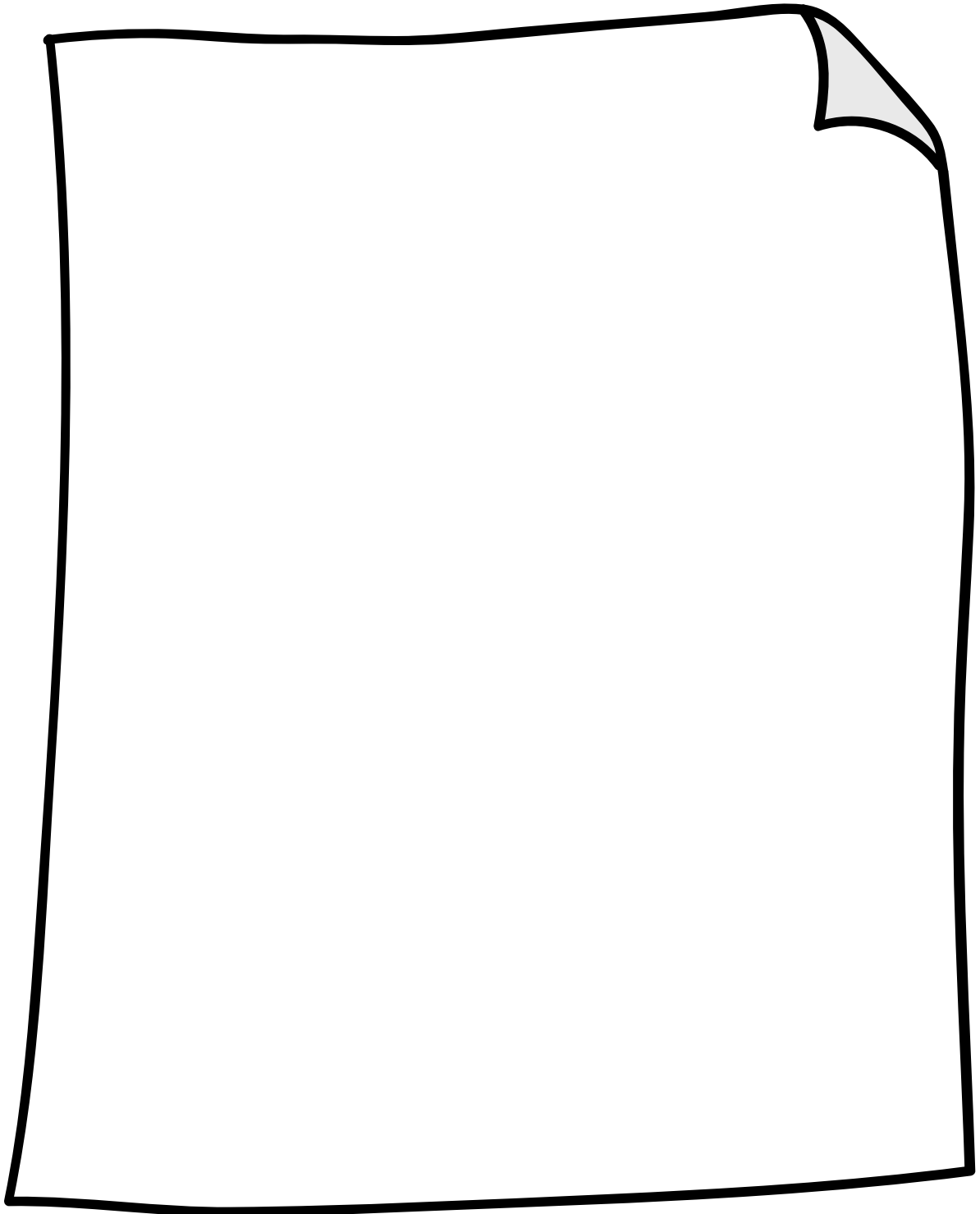
A route that riders might have traveled to spread news.

A star where Luc's village could be located.



Extension Activity

Create a one-page announcement that villagers could post after hearing Louverture's news. Include a headline, a short paragraph, one illustration, and a sentence explaining why freedom matters.



Nat Turner: A Voice for Change

August 1831

The sun had not yet risen over Southampton County, Virginia, when fourteen-year-old Elijah noticed something different. Small groups of people were quietly talking outside their homes. Adults lowered their voices when children came near. Everyone seemed to be waiting for news. The night before, rumors had spread throughout the county. A man named Nat Turner had led a rebellion.

Elijah had heard of Nat Turner before. Many people knew him as a preacher who spent hours reading the Bible and sharing his beliefs. Some said he was thoughtful and intelligent. Others believed he had been chosen for a special purpose. Whatever people thought of him, nearly everyone knew his name.

As the morning continued, more details began to emerge. Turner and a group of followers had organized a plan to challenge slavery in Southampton County. They hoped their actions would inspire other enslaved people to join them and fight for freedom. Moving from plantation to plantation, the group gathered supporters and attempted to disrupt the system that kept thousands of people enslaved.

The news spread quickly. Some people whispered that the rebellion might grow larger. Others worried about how local authorities would respond. Families gathered in homes, churches, and meeting places, discussing what they had heard. Some spoke about freedom with cautious hope. Others feared that harsh consequences would follow.

Elijah listened carefully as the adults talked. He realized they were discussing more than a single event. They were talking about a system that had shaped their lives for generations. They were talking about whether change was possible and what people were willing to risk in pursuit of freedom.

For nearly two days, Turner and his followers continued their efforts before local militias and state forces moved to stop the rebellion. Nat Turner was eventually captured, and many of the participants were arrested or killed. In the weeks that followed, Virginia lawmakers debated slavery and enacted stricter laws that limited the rights of both enslaved and free Black people.

Comprehension Questions

1. Where does the story take place?
2. What news was spreading through the community?
3. How was Nat Turner known before the rebellion?
4. How did different people react to the news?

THINK DEEPER

What risks do people face when they challenge unfair laws or systems? Why might some people decide those risks are worth taking?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Rebellion	An organized effort to challenge or oppose authority.
Preacher	A person who delivers religious teachings or messages.
Justice	Fair treatment and fairness under the law.

Extension Activity

Read each effect below. Decide whether it was an immediate effect (happened shortly after the event) or a long-term effect (continued to influence people or society over time). Write each effect in the correct column of the chart.

Effects to Sort	Immediate Effect	Long-Term Effect
Increased fear throughout Virginia	☐	☐
Nat Turner was captured	☐	☐
Stricter laws were passed limiting the rights of Black people	☐	☐
More discussions about slavery took place across the country	☐	☐
The rebellion became a symbol of resistance	☐	☐
Historians continue to study the event today	☐	☐
Local authorities increased patrols and enforcement	☐	☐
The rebellion influenced future conversations about freedom and	☐	☐

Why is it important to study both the immediate and long-term effects of historical events?

Gabriel Prosser: A Plan for Change

August 1800

The forge glowed bright as sixteen-year-old Samuel watched sparks fly into the night sky. Across the yard, Gabriel Prosser struck hot metal with steady hands. The sound of hammer against iron echoed through the workshop.

Many people knew Gabriel as a skilled blacksmith. He was strong, intelligent, and respected by those around him. But as Samuel worked beside him, he noticed that Gabriel often spoke about something more than metal and tools. He spoke about freedom. In the summer of 1800, conversations spread quietly among enslaved people throughout Virginia. Many hoped for a future where they could live freely and make their own choices. Gabriel believed that change was possible, and he began organizing a plan to challenge the system of slavery.

As weeks passed, trusted individuals traveled between plantations sharing information. Meetings were held in secret. The goal was ambitious. Gabriel hoped to gather hundreds of people to demand freedom and equal rights. Samuel listened carefully as plans were discussed. He admired Gabriel's confidence and leadership.

For the first time, many people felt that their voices mattered and that change might be within reach. But before the plan could be carried out, unexpected storms flooded roads and bridges throughout the area. The delay gave authorities time to learn about the planned rebellion. Soon, arrests began, and the movement came to an end before it could begin.

Gabriel Prosser was an enslaved blacksmith in Virginia who planned one of the largest early slave rebellions in the United States in 1800. Influenced by ideas of freedom and resistance, he organized a group of enslaved and free Black men to march on Richmond, Virginia, with the goal of ending slavery and gaining liberty. Heavy rain and betrayal among some participants delayed the uprising, allowing authorities to arrest Prosser and many of his followers before it could be carried out. He was executed later that year. Although the rebellion did not succeed, Prosser's plan became an important example of organized resistance to slavery and inspired later movements for freedom.

Comprehension Questions

1. What job did Gabriel Prosser have?
2. What goal did Gabriel hope to achieve?
3. How did people communicate about the plan?
4. What event delayed the planned rebellion?

THINK DEEPER

Gabriel Prosser's plan never took place, but people still remember his story today.

Can a person make an impact even if they do not achieve their goal?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Blacksmith	A person who makes or repairs objects from iron or steel.
Rebellion	An organized effort to challenge authority or an unfair system.
Determination	Continuing to work toward a goal even when challenges arise.

Extension Activity

Create a timeline about Gabriel Prosser's life and legacy.

Include:

Gabriel's work as a blacksmith
The planning of the rebellion
The storms that delayed the plan
The discovery of the plot

Project Checklist

- ☐ Includes at least 5 events
- ☐ Includes illustrations or symbols
- ☐ Uses facts from the reading
- ☐ Shows cause-and-effect relationships

Denmark Vesey

Charleston, 1822

Charleston feels different this year. Whispers move through markets, churches, and workyards faster than footsteps. People lower their voices when certain names are spoken. Something is happening beneath the surface of the city, something many only hear about in fragments and rumors.

Denmark Vesey is at the center of these conversations. He is known in the community as a skilled carpenter, a man who earned his freedom after years of enslavement. He moves through the city with purpose, and those who know him speak carefully about his ideas. In quiet gatherings, he shares thoughts about freedom, justice, and what life could look like without slavery. Some listen in agreement, others listen in fear.

Meetings begin to spread through trusted networks. Churches become places where messages are passed along in coded language. Workspaces and street corners turn into spaces where people exchange information while pretending to discuss ordinary business. The city feels like it is holding its breath. As more people hear about the plan being formed, reactions grow divided. Some are filled with hope, imagining a future without chains. Others are gripped with fear, worried about what a rebellion could bring. Tension spreads through Charleston like heat before a storm.

Before anything can happen, the plan is discovered. Authorities move quickly, arresting those believed to be involved. Denmark Vesey is taken into custody, and the city changes overnight from quiet tension to open panic. By the end of the summer, Vesey is executed.

Denmark Vesey was a formerly enslaved man who gained his freedom in Charleston, South Carolina, after winning a lottery. He became a skilled carpenter and established himself within the free Black community while also becoming deeply involved in discussions about slavery and resistance. In 1822, Vesey was accused of organizing a large-scale planned uprising intended to challenge slavery in the region.

Comprehension Questions

1. What kinds of places were used to share information in Charleston?
2. How did different groups of people react to the growing rumors?
3. Why did people communicate in coded or careful ways?
4. What changed in the city after the plan was discovered?

THINK DEEPER

What does liberation mean beyond being physically free, and what are some different ways people try to achieve it?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Liberation	The act of being set free from control, oppression, or unfair systems.
Resistance	Refusing to accept unfair control or treatment
Organize	To bring people together in a planned way for a purpose
Justice	Fair and equal treatment for all people

Extension Activity

Create an illustrated “soundscape” of Charleston during this time.

Label each section:

- 1. Market Street
- 2. Church Gathering
- 3. Workshop Conversation
- 4. City at Night

In each section, write or draw:

- 1. What people might be saying (whispers, warnings, hopes, rumors)
- 2. What emotions are present in that space
- 3. One “hidden message” that shows what people are really thinking but cannot openly say

Unit 3: Rebellions and Resistance

Stono Rebellion

German Coast Uprising

Amistad

New York Slave Revolt of 1712

Note to Parents and Educators

This unit explores historical uprisings connected to slavery and resistance. Some of the events described include violence, loss of life, and armed conflict. These topics are presented in an age appropriate, educational manner to help students understand the realities of history and the experiences of people who lived through these events.

You may want to preview the readings before your child completes them. When discussing these lessons at home, focus on guiding reflection rather than agreement or disagreement with historical actions. Helpful guiding questions might include:

What was happening in society that led to this event?

Why do you think people made the choices they did?

How do people today work toward fairness or change in peaceful ways?

Families are also encouraged to share their own perspectives and values in conversation. These discussions can help students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and a deeper understanding of history through multiple viewpoints.

You will also notice that some vocabulary words repeat across readings, such as resistance, justice, and freedom. This repetition is intentional. It is designed to support vocabulary development, deepen understanding, and build fluency with academic language so students can recognize and use these terms confidently across different historical contexts.

Stono Rebellion

South Carolina, 1739

The morning begins near the Stono River, about 20 miles southwest of Charleston, South Carolina. The air feels still, but movement is already underway among a small group of enslaved men who have been planning in secrecy. At the center is Jemmy, also known as “Cato,” a literate man believed to have come from the Central African Kingdom of Kongo. Around him are about twenty enslaved men, many thought to be Kongolese and possibly former soldiers who understood discipline, coordination, and strategy.

The group moves with purpose before most of the colony is fully awake. Their first action is decisive. They raid a firearms store, killing two shopkeepers and taking weapons. With arms in hand, their position shifts from hidden resistance to open rebellion. They are no longer isolated individuals bound by plantation systems, but a coordinated force moving together. Their goal is clear. They begin a march south toward Spanish Florida, where enslaved Africans were promised freedom by Spanish authorities if they escaped slavery in English colonies. As they move along the road, their numbers grow briefly as others join or are forced into the unfolding conflict. The sound of marching and alarm spreads quickly through nearby plantations.

Fear rises across the region. Plantation owners and colonial forces scramble to respond. Armed militia are organized, and pursuit begins. The rebellion is eventually stopped through violent confrontation, and many of the participants are killed or captured. Jemmy and others do not reach Florida.

Although the uprising is suppressed, its impact spreads far beyond the Stono River. Colonial leaders tighten slave codes and increase restrictions, but the rebellion remains a powerful reminder of organized resistance, shared African knowledge, and the pursuit of freedom even under extreme danger.

Slave codes were laws created in the United States to control enslaved people and limit their rights. These laws defined enslaved people as property, restricted their movement, and made it illegal for them to learn to read or write in many places. Slave codes also limited how enslaved people could gather, communicate, or resist. They were enforced to maintain the system of slavery and prevent rebellions or escape attempts.

Comprehension Questions

1. Where did the Stono Rebellion begin?
2. Who led the uprising and what is known about his background?
3. What was the first major action the group took at the start of the rebellion?
4. Where were the rebels trying to go and why?
5. How did colonial authorities respond to the uprising?

THINK DEEPER

How do laws shape people’s daily lives, and why might some laws be created to control certain groups of people?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Conspiracy	A secret plan made by a group to take action, often against authority
Resistance	Refusing to accept control or oppression
Enslaved	Forced into labor without freedom or rights
Militia	Armed group organized to enforce control or respond to conflict

Extension Activity

Understanding Causes of Resistance

Directions:

The Stono Rebellion happened because of specific conditions that shaped the lives of enslaved people in South Carolina.

Choose **three** causes from below and explain how each one contributed to resistance:

- harsh labor conditions
- laws restricting movement and education
- separation of families
- violence and punishment
- the hope of escaping to Spanish Florida
- communication and shared knowledge among enslaved people

Write:

For each cause, write 2–3 sentences explaining how it may have influenced the decision to resist.

German Coast Uprising

Louisiana, 1811

Along the German Coast of Louisiana, plantation fields stretch between the Mississippi River and dense wetlands. Life is controlled by forced labor, strict discipline, and constant fear, but beneath that surface, communication and frustration build across plantations.

In January 1811, that pressure breaks into action. Enslaved workers begin to move from plantation to plantation, gathering others as they go. The group grows as it travels, carrying tools and weapons while calling others to join. Their movement is organized and determined, and at moments it appears as though a large-scale transformation is underway.

Their advance is directed toward New Orleans, a major center of trade and power. As they move, alarm spreads quickly among plantation owners and local authorities. Messages are sent ahead, and armed forces begin to form in response.

Militia and federal troops confront the group before they can reach the city. Fighting erupts along the route, and the uprising is violently suppressed. Many are killed, captured, or forced to flee.

Although the German Coast Uprising ends in defeat, it remains one of the largest organized slave revolts in U.S. history. It demonstrates both the scale of resistance and the depth of the desire for freedom across plantation communities.

The German Coast Uprising is remembered in Louisiana through ongoing acts of public commemoration. While it is not widely recognized as an official holiday, the event is honored each January with community-based observances that focus on education and remembrance. Beginning in 1995, the African American History Alliance of Louisiana has hosted annual programs marking the anniversary of the uprising.

Comprehension Questions

1. What conditions in Louisiana contributed to tension before the uprising began?
2. How did the group of enslaved people organize and grow as they moved between plantations?
3. What was the goal of the movement described in the passage?
4. What happened when militia and federal troops confronted the group?

THINK DEEPER

Why do you think it is important for communities to remember events like the German Coast Uprising, even when they are difficult to talk about?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Uprising	A sudden act of resistance against authority
Plantation	Large farm where enslaved labor was forced to work
Militia	Armed group formed to enforce control or respond to conflict
Suppressed	Stopped forcefully, often through violence

Extension Activity

Chain Reaction Storyboard

Create a 6-panel storyboard showing how the uprising spread.

- 1. First gathering
- 2. Recruitment at plantation
- 3. Movement along the river
- 4. Growing numbers and momentum
- 5. Encounter with militia forces

Final outcome

Each panel must include:
One caption sentence
One emotion word
One visual symbol

Amistad

Atlantic Ocean, 1839

The Atlantic Ocean stretches wide and unchanging, but inside the hold of the Amistad, everything is tightly confined and unstable. The ship is carrying Africans who have been kidnapped from their homelands and forced into a transatlantic system of slavery. Conditions are harsh, and communication becomes the most valuable tool among them.

As the voyage continues, the captives begin to observe patterns in the crew's routines. Quiet planning takes shape. At a chosen moment, the group acts. A struggle erupts on deck, shifting control of the ship away from the crew. What follows is uncertain.

The ship changes direction multiple times, moving along coastal waters while authorities attempt to determine its fate. Eventually, it is intercepted and brought into U.S. jurisdiction. The people aboard are placed in custody, and their status becomes a national legal question. A court case follows that reaches the highest levels of government. The central debate focuses on whether the individuals aboard are legally enslaved property or free people who were kidnapped illegally. After years of argument, the court rules in favor of their freedom. The Amistad case becomes a defining moment, connecting ocean resistance to legal struggles over human rights and justice in the United States.

While Amistad is often highlighted in books and films, it is important to understand that it is not the only story of rebellion during the Middle Passage. Across the transatlantic slave trade, there were many documented and undocumented acts of resistance on ships, where captured Africans resisted bondage in different ways, even though not all of these stories were recorded or widely remembered.

Comprehension Questions

1. What was the condition of the people aboard the Amistad at the start of the journey?
2. What action changed control of the ship?
3. What happened after the ship was taken into custody?
4. Why did the case become a legal issue in the United States?
5. What was the final decision of the court?

THINK DEEPER

Why do you think some stories of resistance become widely remembered while others are forgotten or left out of history?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Abduction	Being taken away illegally by force
Revolt	An act of rising against authority or control
Captive	A person held against their will
Verdict	A formal decision made by a court

Extension Activity

Justice Timeline Debate

What Happened?

Capture and voyage

Revolt on the ship

Court case and verdict

This part might be challenging.

Write:

One argument for the captors' side

One argument for the captives' freedom

A final reflection: What does justice mean in this situation?

New York Slave Revolt of 1712

In the early morning hours of New York City, the streets are still quiet, but tension exists beneath the surface of colonial life. Enslaved Africans, living under harsh conditions in a growing port city, carry memories of resistance from their homelands and from other communities forced into slavery across the Atlantic world.

A group of enslaved people gathers in secret. Their plan is sudden and desperate. Fires are set in several locations, lighting up the city and drawing attention away from their movement. In the confusion, a small group turns on slaveholders and colonial residents who respond with panic and force.

The uprising is brief. Colonial militia quickly arrives, overpowering the group and ending the revolt. Many participants are captured, punished, or executed.

In the aftermath, colonial leaders respond with stricter laws, increasing restrictions on enslaved Africans and free Black residents. Surveillance grows tighter, and punishments become more severe.

Although the revolt is quickly suppressed, it marks an early moment of resistance in colonial America. It reveals that even in the North, enslaved people resisted bondage and challenged systems of control long before larger uprisings in later years.

Resistance to slavery occurred in many places where slavery existed, not only in the Southern United States. Enslaved people resisted in different ways depending on their circumstances and opportunities. Some organized rebellions, while others used everyday forms of resistance such as slowing work, preserving cultural traditions, secretly learning to read, damaging equipment, destroying crops, or using their positions in households and workplaces to push back against the system of slavery. For example, some enslaved cooks resisted by poisoning food, while others found ways to disrupt the labor system that controlled their lives. These actions show that resistance took many forms.

Comprehension Questions

1. What actions did the group take during the uprising?
2. Why did fires play an important role in the event?
3. How did colonial authorities respond?
4. What happened to the people involved after the revolt?
5. How did this event change laws in New York?

THINK DEEPER

Why do you think people who are experiencing injustice may choose to resist, even when they know there could be serious consequences?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Resistance	Refusing to accept control or unfair treatment
Suppressed	Stopped forcefully, often through violence or authority
Militia	Armed group organized to enforce order or respond to conflict
Punishment	A consequence given for breaking rules or laws

Extension Activity

Resistance Newspaper

Directions:

Imagine you are creating a newspaper from 1712. Create a front page explaining what happened during the New York Slave Revolt.

Include:

- A headline about the event
- A short summary of what happened
- What the enslaved people were resisting
- How colonial leaders responded
- One question you would ask about fairness, freedom, or justice

Unit 4: Building Black Communities

Freedmen's Town

Nicodemus

Mound Bayou

Allensworth

Note to Parents and Educators

This unit highlights four important examples of Black community building in the United States after slavery: Freedmen's Town, Nicodemus, Mound Bayou, and Allensworth. These communities were chosen to represent different regions and different approaches to building safety, opportunity, and independence.

It is important to note that these are only a few examples. Across the United States, many other Black towns, neighborhoods, and settlements were formed during and after Reconstruction, each with its own unique story. The goal of this unit is to introduce students to the broader idea of Black self-determination and community building, not to present a complete list.

Families are encouraged to continue exploring these histories together. This can include reading additional books, visiting museums, exploring local historical sites, or researching surviving towns and landmarks connected to this period. Many of these communities still exist today and offer opportunities for real world learning and connection.

As students engage with these lessons, consider discussing questions such as:

What does it take to build a community from the ground up?

Why were land, education, and leadership so important in these towns?

How do communities preserve their history over time?

These conversations can help deepen understanding and connect historical learning to present day experiences and places.

Freedmen's Village

Arlington, Virginia

The wagon rattled over the uneven road as twelve-year-old Mahogany held tightly to her younger brother's hand. Her parents sat quietly beside them, watching the growing city of Houston come into view. Just a few years earlier, their family had been enslaved on a plantation. Now, for the first time, they were traveling toward a place where they could build a life of their own.

As they crossed Buffalo Bayou, Mahogany noticed small wooden houses scattered across the landscape. Some were barely more than simple cabins. Others were still being built. Men lifted boards into place while women carried supplies and prepared meals for workers. Children ran between homes, laughing and playing. Everywhere she looked, people seemed busy creating something new.

"This is Freedmen's Town," her father said. "People here are building a community for themselves."

The family was given a small piece of land. There was no house waiting for them, so they joined neighbors in gathering lumber and tools. Day after day, they worked together. When one family needed help raising a wall or repairing a roof, others came to assist. Slowly, the empty lot became a home.

Soon Mahogany discovered that Freedmen's Town was more than a collection of houses. On Sundays, families gathered for church services that filled the neighborhood with music and hope. During the week, community members met to share news, discuss challenges, and help one another find work. A small school opened nearby, and Mahogany eagerly took her seat among other children who were finally being given the chance to learn to read and write. Years passed, and the community continued to grow. New businesses opened. More families arrived. Streets that had once been quiet became filled with shops, churches, schools, and gathering places. Although many residents had begun with very little, they were creating opportunities for future generations.

Although Freedmen's Town still exists, it is much smaller than it once was. Over time, development and growth in Houston changed the neighborhood and many families moved away. Today, people work to preserve its history and honor the community that formerly enslaved people built after the Civil War.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Mahogany's family decide to move to Freedmen's Town?
2. What did Mahogany notice when her family first arrived in the community?
3. How did neighbors work together to help build Freedmen's Town?
4. Besides homes, what important institutions were established in the community?
5. Why is Freedmen's Town remembered as an important part of American history today?

THINK DEEPER

What does it mean to build a community when you start with very few resources, but a strong shared purpose?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Vocabulary Word	Definition
Community	A group of people living and working together in the same area.
Cooperation	Working together to achieve a shared goal.
Opportunity	A chance to learn, grow, or succeed.
Resilience	The ability to recover from challenges and keep moving forward.

Extension Activity

Directions:

Imagine you are one of the first families arriving in Freedmen's Town after the Civil War. Your community is growing, and residents must decide what to build first. Choose five of the following:

For each choice, explain:

- Why the community needs it.
- How it would help families succeed.

- School
Church
Homes
General store
Farm or garden
Community meeting hall
Blacksmith shop
Medical clinic
Library
Playground

Challenge:

Rank your five choices from most important to least important and explain why your top choice should be built first.

Nicodemus, Kansas

The land stretches wide and open, interrupted only by tall grass and wind. It does not look like a town yet. It does not look like anything that belongs to people at all. But for the families arriving here in 1877, it represents something else entirely. It represents possibility.

These are Black settlers who have traveled west during the Exoduster Movement, leaving behind the violent uncertainty of the post-Reconstruction South. Many arrive with little to no belongings, tired bodies, and hope. Kansas is not easy, but it is promised as a place where land can be claimed and futures can be built. They name the settlement Nicodemus.

At first, there is almost nothing. No paved roads. No established homes. Only the land itself. Families begin marking space, deciding where homes will stand, where crops will grow, and where shared buildings might rise. The wind is constant, but so is the work. People dig into soil and learn how to grow food in conditions that are different from what they left behind. Homes are built from what can be gathered, carried, and traded.

Nicodemus, Kansas was founded in 1877 by African Americans who moved west seeking land ownership and opportunity during the Reconstruction era. It became one of the most significant Black homesteading settlements on the Great Plains.

Today, Nicodemus is no longer a thriving town in the way it was during its peak population years. Many residents moved away over time due to economic changes, limited resources, and shifting transportation routes. However, the town has not disappeared. It is preserved as a historic site and national landmark.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did many families move to Nicodemus?
2. What did the land look like when settlers arrived?
3. What challenges did people face when building the community?
4. How did families begin organizing space in the settlement?
5. Why is Nicodemus still important today?

THINK DEEPER

What risks do people take when they move to a new place in search of opportunity?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Homesteading	Claiming and settling land to build a home and farm it
Migration	Moving from one place to another to live
Settlement	A community built by people living in a new area
Independence	The ability to live and make decisions without outside control

Extension Activity

Homestead Survival Plan

Imagine you are one of the first families arriving in Nicodemus.

Create a survival and settlement plan that includes:

1. Land Plan
 - Where will you build your home and why?
 - Where will farming or food sources be located?
 2. Community Plan
 - What spaces are needed for people to support each other?
 - How will decisions be made in the settlement?
 3. Survival Strategy
 - What challenges might the environment create?
 - How will families work together to overcome them?
 4. Creative Element
 - A labeled sketch or diagram of your homestead

A short “founding message” (5–7 sentences) explaining why you chose this land.

Mound Bayou, Mississippi

The train slowed as it approached the small cluster of buildings in the Mississippi Delta. Out the window, ten-year-old John pressed his face close to the glass. Miles of flat farmland stretched in every direction, but ahead he could see something different forming: a town built by Black families, for Black families.

His mother explained that this was Mound Bayou. People here had left crowded, unfair conditions behind and worked together to build their own community. As John stepped onto the platform, he noticed how much was still being built. Some streets were unpaved. Houses stood close together, many newly built. Yet there was a sense of order and purpose in the way people moved, as if everyone understood they were part of something important. Men unloaded supplies from wagons while women organized food and tools. Children carried water and ran messages between buildings. In the center of the town, a small schoolhouse stood with its doors open. John could hear voices inside, practicing reading aloud. Not far away, a clinic was being prepared to serve families who had long been denied access to medical care.

“This town belongs to us,” his mother said quietly. “We built it ourselves.”

Mound Bayou grew into one of the most successful all-Black towns in the United States. Founded in the late 1800s by formerly enslaved people and their descendants, it became a place where residents created their own businesses, schools, and local leadership. For many years, it stood as a model of self-governance and independence in the Mississippi Delta. Although the town has changed over time and is much smaller today, Mound Bayou remains an important symbol of Black self-determination, showing how communities created spaces of safety, opportunity, and belonging even in difficult conditions.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did John's family travel to Mound Bayou?
2. What did John notice when he first arrived in the town?
3. What kinds of community spaces and services were being built in Mound Bayou?
4. How did people work together to build the town?
5. Why is Mound Bayou considered an important example of Black self-determination?

THINK DEEPER

Why is it important for a community to have control over its own decisions and resources?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Self-governance	A community making its own decisions and rules
Economy	The system of trade, work, and money in a community
Independence	Freedom from outside control
Leadership	The ability to guide and make decisions for a group

Extension Activity

Town Council

Choose one role:

Farmer

Business owner

Teacher

Church leader

Community health worker

Write short responses to propose solutions for:

- How to build a strong local economy
- How to establish a school system
- How to protect and support families in the town

A “Town Charter Statement” (6–8 sentences) describing the values and goals of Mound Bayou

Include:

A name for your town council

A symbol that represents unity or leadership in the community

Allensworth, California

Olandria leaned forward as the train slowed, her forehead nearly touching the glass. The land outside looked endless, flat and sun-bleached, like it had been waiting a long time for something to happen on it. Then, almost suddenly, the train gave a final pull and stopped. For a moment, no one spoke.

When she stepped down, the air felt different, dry and still, carrying the sound of distant voices instead of traffic or crowds. People were not rushing here. They were watching, noticing arrivals the way a small town does when it knows everyone matters.

Her father adjusted the bag on his shoulder. "This is Allensworth," he said.

Olandria followed him along a narrow path that wasn't really a street yet. A woman passed by and nodded at her father like he belonged here already. That surprised her. They had only just arrived, but no one treated him like a stranger.

A bell rang somewhere nearby, not loud, but clear enough to make her turn. It came from a small building where children were already seated inside, their voices rising and falling in reading practice. Olandria slowed as she listened through the open window, trying to catch the words.

A little farther down, two men stood talking in low voices near a wooden structure that looked like it had been repaired more than once. They were not arguing. They were deciding something.

Her mother touched her shoulder gently. "They built this for themselves," she said.

Allensworth was founded in 1908 in California by Colonel Allen Allensworth and other Black settlers who wanted to create a community where they could govern, educate, and support themselves. It became the first town in California founded, financed, and governed by African Americans. Over time, water shortages and economic difficulties led many residents to leave. The town declined, but it did not disappear completely. Today, Allensworth is preserved as a California State Historic Park, where visitors can walk through its remaining buildings and learn about the community that once thrived there.

Comprehension Questions

1. How does Olandria first feel when the train arrives in Allensworth?
2. What details show that Allensworth is already an organized community when she arrives?
3. How do people in the town interact with Olandria's father, and why is that significant?
4. What do Olandria notice about the way decisions are made or discussed in the community?
5. Why is Allensworth considered an important example of Black self-determination in history?

THINK DEEPER

Why do you think education was seen as the foundation for building a successful community?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Vision	A plan or idea for the future
Education	The process of learning knowledge and skills
Community	A group of people working and living together with shared goals
Independence	The ability to make decisions and live without outside control

Extension Activity

Design the Future City Plan

Make a map of Allenswoth

- Schools
- Homes
- Farms
- Businesses
- Community centers

How the town will grow over the next 10 years?
What industries or skills will support the community?
How education connects to future success?

Unit 5: Communities Under Attack

Tulsa
Rosewood

Note to Parents and Educators

This unit examines difficult moments in American history when thriving Black communities were targeted and destroyed by racial violence. The lessons include discussions of discrimination, attacks on communities, loss of property, and loss of life. While these topics can be challenging, they are important parts of understanding American history and the experiences of many Black families and communities.

The goal of this unit is not to focus on violence itself, but to help students understand the strength of the communities that existed before these attacks, the impact of what was lost, and the ways survivors preserved their stories. As students complete these lessons, families are encouraged to discuss the importance of community, fairness, historical memory, and resilience.

Parents and caregivers may wish to preview the readings and participate in discussions using questions such as:

What made these communities successful?

Why is it important to remember communities that no longer exist?

How can people preserve history when buildings and neighborhoods are gone?

What can we learn from the resilience of survivors?

Tulsa Race Massacre

Greenwood, Oklahoma, 1921

The streets of Greenwood are busy long before the afternoon sun reaches its highest point. Store owners sweep sidewalks in front of their businesses. Children walk home from school, laughing and talking about the day. Customers step in and out of restaurants, grocery stores, and offices. The neighborhood is alive with movement.

Twelve-year-old Amos loves walking through Greenwood with his father. Nearly every building seems to tell a story. There is a doctor's office owned by a Black physician, a newspaper office printing local news, and shops selling everything from clothing to household goods. People from across Tulsa come to Greenwood to work, worship, and support local businesses.

"One day," his father tells him as they pass a row of storefronts, "you can build something here too."

Amos smiles. It is easy to imagine a future in a place where opportunity seems to be growing every day. But in late May of 1921, rumors begin spreading through Tulsa. Conversations grow tense. Adults lower their voices when children enter the room. By the evening of May 31, crowds gather, and fear replaces the confidence that once filled the streets. What follows changes Greenwood forever.

Violence erupts as white mobs enter the community. Homes, businesses, churches, and schools are damaged or destroyed. Fires spread through entire blocks. Families flee with only what they can carry. The neighborhood that had taken years to build is devastated in a matter of hours.

When the violence ends, thousands of residents are left without homes. Businesses that supported generations of families are gone. Yet even in the aftermath, survivors begin helping one another. They search for loved ones, share resources, and slowly begin the difficult work of rebuilding.

Comprehension Questions

1. What kinds of businesses and institutions existed in Greenwood before 1921?
2. How did Sarah view her future in Greenwood?
3. What changes began taking place in the community before the violence occurred?
4. What happened to many homes and businesses during the attack?
5. How did survivors respond after the destruction?

THINK DEEPER

Why is it important to remember communities not only for how they were harmed, but also for what they achieved?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Prosperity	Success and growth, especially in a community or economy
Destruction	Great damage or ruin
Resilience	The ability to recover from hardship or challenges
Memory	The act of remembering people, places, and events from the past

Extension Activity

Greenwood Community Museum Exhibit

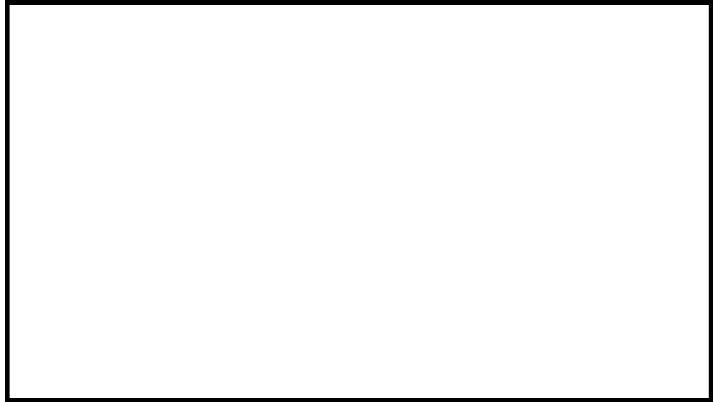
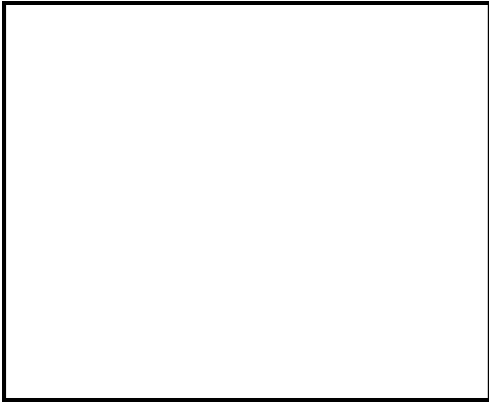
Imagine you are helping create a museum exhibit about Greenwood.

Include:

A title for the exhibit

Three artifacts that represent life in Greenwood before 1921

A short explanation of why each artifact is important



Rosewood Massacre

Florida, 1923

Zion could tell what time of day it was by the sounds outside his window. In the morning, he heard roosters crowing and wagons rolling down the dirt road. By afternoon, he could hear neighbors calling to one another from their porches and children racing through the open fields between homes.

Rosewood was the kind of place where everyone seemed connected. If someone needed help repairing a fence, neighbors showed up. If a family celebrated a wedding or welcomed a new baby, the whole community knew about it. Zion liked that about the town.

One Saturday afternoon, he followed his grandfather into the woods to gather firewood. "These woods have watched over this town for a long time," his grandfather said.

A few days later, something felt different.

The adults stopped talking so freely when children were nearby. Groups gathered on porches late into the evening, speaking in worried voices. When Zion asked what was wrong, his mother simply told him to stay close to home.

Word spread that a white woman in a nearby community had accused a Black man of attacking her. Although there was little evidence connecting anyone in Rosewood to the incident, rumors quickly spread throughout the area. Angry white mobs began gathering and demanding answers. As the days passed, the tension grew.

Soon, armed groups of white men entered Rosewood. Some came from nearby towns, while others traveled from surrounding areas after hearing the rumors. They attacked homes, churches, and businesses, searching for people they blamed for the incident. As the violence increased, many residents fled into the nearby forests to escape.

Hidden among the trees, Zion and his family listened as gunfire echoed in the distance. The town they knew was being destroyed. Buildings burned, families were separated, and neighbors who had spent years building their community were forced to leave everything behind. Days later, when it was finally safe to emerge, Rosewood would never be the same.

Comprehension Questions

1. What was daily life like in Rosewood before 1923?
2. How did residents first become aware that something was changing?
3. What happened to many families during the violence?
4. Why were many survivors unable to return to Rosewood?

THINK DEEPER

How can people preserve the history of a community even after the community itself no longer exists?

Try to use one vocabulary word in your response.

Word	Meaning
Displacement	Being forced to leave a home or community
Survivor	A person who lives through a difficult or dangerous event
Legacy	Something important that is passed down to future generations
Remembrance	The act of honoring and recalling the past

Extension Activity

Rosewood Memory Quilt

Throughout history, quilts have often been used to tell stories and preserve memories.
Create a paper "memory quilt" with at least six squares.

Each square should include:
A drawing or symbol
A word or phrase connected to Rosewood
A short explanation of its meaning

Possible themes:
Family
Home
Community
Courage
Survival
Remembrance

Extension: Write a paragraph explaining how your quilt helps preserve the story of
Rosewood for future generations.

Parent Reading List

Black Homesteaders in the American West by Nell Irvin Painter

Explores Black migration westward and the creation of communities such as Nicodemus.

Mound Bayou: Mississippi's Black Town by David H. Jackson Jr.

Examines the founding, leadership, and legacy of Mound Bayou, one of the most successful all-Black towns in American history.

Opal Lee and What It Means to Be Free by Alice Faye Duncan

Connects personal storytelling with broader themes of freedom, memory, and community activism.

Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi

Examines the history of racist ideas in America and the resistance to them. Provides important context for understanding slavery, Reconstruction, and Black resilience.

The Great Migration: Journey to the North by Kadir Nelson

A visually engaging exploration of Black migration and community formation during the Great Migration.

The Maroons: The First Freedom Fighters in the Americas by Mavis C. Campbell

Explores Maroon communities throughout the Americas and their efforts to establish independent societies outside of slavery.

Up from Slavery by Booker T. Washington

A firsthand account of life after emancipation, emphasizing education, self-reliance, leadership, and community development.

Note to Families

This reading list highlights works written by Black authors and scholars, but it represents only a small portion of the rich literature available on Black history. The communities and resistance movements featured in this workbook are only a few examples of the many ways Black people have organized, resisted oppression, and built thriving communities throughout history. Families are encouraged to continue learning through books, museums, historical sites, documentaries, oral histories, and community organizations to deepen their understanding of these important stories.

About the Author



Jade Weatherington, M.Ed is an educator with a background in African and African American History, English, and World History, as well as a Master's in Parent, Family, and Youth Education. With years of experience working with students in both public school and homeschool settings, she focuses on making history engaging, accessible, and meaningful for young learners. Her work centers on helping students understand the stories of resistance, resilience, and community-building that are often left out of traditional curriculum.

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Find more resources at:
www.TeacherJade.com