

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

Ethnography of Africatown

Students explore sources that illustrate the transfer of cultural traditions from the founders of Africatown to its current residents, as well as how Africatown has changed over time.

Students chart the rise and fall of Africatown's economy before considering how a museum exhibit showcasing the *Clotilda* could impact the community's pride and economy.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Anthropology, Archaeology, Sociology, Conservation, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, Civics, U.S. History, World History, Storytelling

CONTENTS

2 PDFs, 2 Links

OVERVIEW

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For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/ethnography-africatown/>

In collaboration with

DIRECTIONS

Sunken Slave Ship Unit Driving Question: *How do artifacts and their preservation impact communities?*

Uncovering the Past Lesson Driving Question: *How are artifacts and stories of past lives uncovered?*

1. Prompt students to reflect on what they have already learned about Africatown and its development in order to develop a KWL chart.

- Show students [this image](#) of the sign marking Africatown and engage students in a three-minute quick write.
 - *Ask: What do we already know about Africatown and its development from previous activities in this unit? What do you want to know?*
- Summarize key student ideas on a KWL chart and post it in a visible location for students to revisit through the remainder of the activity.

2. Prompt students to consider the impact of the *Clotilda's* discovery on current citizens of Africatown in order to determine what should become of the *Clotilda's* remains.

- Explain to students that the discovery of the *Clotilda* had an impact on the citizens of Africatown, especially when it came to making decisions about what to do with the *Clotilda's* remains. Tell students they will be watching a brief video and reading an article to learn more about the impact on the citizens of Africatown.
- Distribute a copy of the [Africatown: A Changed Community](#) worksheet to each student.
- As a class, watch from 1:46 to 5:59 of [Finding the Last Slave Ship](#). Direct students to individually respond to questions on the worksheet while watching the video.
- After watching the video, direct students to read the article [Their Ancestors Survived Slavery. Can Their Descendants Save the Town They Built?](#) and continue responding to the questions on the worksheet.
- After reading and answering the questions, direct students to partner up and review their responses with one another. Guide students to focus on how their personal connections to Africatown compare to one another.

3. Engage students in reflection on how Africatown has changed since it was founded, and brainstorm how the story of Africatown and the *Clotilda* could be shared with others.

- Conduct a class discussion to review the key points of the *Africatown: A Changed Community* worksheet.
- Ask the following questions:
 - *How could a Clotilda exhibit or memorial aid the community in preserving Africatown and its heritage, in spite of difficulties and hardship?*
 - *In what ways could an exhibit or memorial in Africatown counter the effects of industrialism and economic downfall?*
 - *Based on what we've seen and read, what values would those from Africatown want this memorial or exhibit to demonstrate? How might the developers go about ensuring it would meet those goals?*
 - *How can knowing the story of their ancestors' past be important to their present?*
 - *What is the most important thing you would want visitors to the museum or exhibit to know about Africatown by the time they left?*
- Wrap up the activity by adding students' new learning to the last column of the KWL chart (from Step 1) by adding what they have learned.

Informal Assessment

Africatown: A Changed Community: Monitor students' work to make sure they understand the impact of industry on a small, local economy and how community-based institutions, such as churches and schools, support a sustainable community. If necessary, assist students in making connections between their own communities and Africatown.

Extending the Learning

Photo Essay Anthropological Extension: Have students investigate the ethnography of their communities, either within the school or the community at large. They get to know some of the members of the community that represent an intentional sample group of the population. Students attend a community event and become an active part of the community. Then, through interviews, surveys, photographs, and the anthropological lens of "do no harm," students summarize their findings and bring all research elements together to create a video, slideshow, or otherwise tech-supported presentation that tells the story of their community.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Anthropology

- Archaeology
- Sociology
- Conservation
- English Language Arts

Geography

- Human Geography

Social Studies

- Civics
- U.S. History
- World History

Storytelling

Teaching Approach

- Project-based learning

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Multimedia instruction
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

THE COLLEGE, CAREER & CIVIC LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS

- **D1.5.3-5:**

Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the questions.

- **D2.Civ.7.6-8:**

Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.

- **D2.Eco.1.6-8:**

Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

- **D2.Geo.4.6-8:**

Explain how cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people in both nearby and distant places.

- **D2.Geo.6.6-8:**

Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures.

- **D2.His.1.6-8:**

Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Chart paper

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per learner, Monitor/screen, Projector, Speakers

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

- Computer lab

GROUPING

- Heterogeneous grouping
- Large-group instruction
- Large-group learning
- Small-group instruction
- Small-group learning
- Small-group work

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Both Cudjo Lewis, through his words in *Barracoon*, and Lorna Woods, a descendant of Charlie Lewis, Cudjo's brother, explain how Africatown was settled once the previously enslaved people realized they would never make enough money to sail back to Africa. Instead, they worked hard and bought a piece of land from their former enslaver, and built the community from the ground up. Africatown was the little piece of the world Clotilda's survivors and their descendants could celebrate their heritage and culture and build pride in who they were and from whence they came. This pride and heritage were passed down from generation to generation, even as the state and city began to move in and industrialize the surrounding areas, causing pollution and financial hardships that were difficult to overcome. Over time, a stable and sustainable community became harder and harder to salvage. Now, the discovery and preservation of the *Clotilda* are bringing new hope to the restoration of this once great community that wants to thrive and represent its strong heritage once again.

Prior Knowledge

["When considering what should become of the remains of the Clotilda, one factor to consider is the condition of the wreck and what can be raised. That entails more than just technical help and funding, but what is required to preserve the wreck once it comes out of the water. That is a complex question involving chemistry and conservation science."]

Recommended Prior Activities

- [Finding the Clotilda](#)

- [From Benin to Mobile](#)
- [Meet Cudjo Lewis](#)

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Africatown	noun	small community located about three miles north of Mobile, Alabama, that was founded by previously enslaved people, many of whom were originally brought to the United States on the <i>Clotilda</i> , the last-known slave ship, after the prohibition of the import of enslaved people.
community	noun	social group whose members share common heritage, interests, or culture.
ethnography	noun	scientific study of individual cultures and customs, often associated with anthropology.
industrialization	noun	growth of machine production and factories.
perspective	noun	point of view or way of looking at a situation.
poverty	noun	status of having very little money or material goods.
self-sufficient	adjective	able to support all of one's basic needs without assistance.

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

- [PBS: Restoring Ancient Artifacts: What Does it Take?](#)
- [NPR: Alabama's Africatown Hopes for Revival After Slave Ship Discovery](#)

Instructional Content

- [SACC: Teaching Activities](#)

