

I SUNKEN SLAVE SHIP

Welcome! Whether you have already begun teaching this unit or are previewing it in preparation for the future, this document will give you a deeper understanding of this unit’s primary content, its project-based structure, and the pedagogical approaches underlying its design.

BIG IDEAS

When teaching about slavery in America, we rarely can visualize the trip in its entirety—from the barracoons in Africa, across the Atlantic Ocean, to the docks of the American shore. Nor do we get to hear the story from the mouth of those who experienced it. However, thanks to author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston and her book *Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black” Cargo*, now we can. In 1927, Hurston conducted and recorded a series of interviews with Cudjo Lewis, the last-known survivor of the last American slave ship, the *Clotilda*. The ship illegally traveled from Benin to Mobile, Alabama, with 110 enslaved persons in 1860, after the importation of enslaved people was illegal in the United States. There, in the Mobile Bay, the *Clotilda* was scuttled and burned in hopes that the crime would go unpunished.

After slavery was abolished, the newly freed men and women, including Cudjo Lewis, realized they could not afford their dream of returning to Africa, so they founded a town near Mobile that they called Africatown. This special place allowed them to live and work together while maintaining their cultural heritage. Africatown was once a self-sustaining community, but over time, the town fell victim to industrialization. Abandoned homes now make up the heart of the residential area, and an abandoned paper mill, petrochemical plant, pipelines, and coal terminals surround it.

Many of today’s citizens of Africatown are descendants of the town’s original founders. They have been holding on to the hope that one day the *Clotilda* would be found, to reveal the truth of what happened over 100 years ago. While many sunken slave ships have been discovered underwater off the coast of Alabama, sometimes buried deep in sand and sediment, the recent discovery of the *Clotilda* is finally opening up a new chapter in the story of Africatown. Now that it has been found, what happens next is the remaining question. This unit allows students to consider how they might help bring hope and restoration to this town through the recent discovery of the *Clotilda*’s remains. Their solutions could help restore the pride of this historically significant community that wants to thrive and represent its strong heritage once again.

As students study texts, images, and videos to

UNIT DRIVING QUESTION

How do artifacts and their preservation impact communities?



learn about the complexity of working with marine archaeology, they realize that uncovering the ship represents the power of perseverance and pride, and how the lost and forgotten can be rediscovered. Students take on the role of a historian who must make important decisions about how a Clotilda memorial or exhibit will be presented and what stories it will tell. Since the Clotilda is an important reminder of a dark period in American history, students also decide whether the Clotilda should be either a permanent or traveling exhibit. They develop a sketch of the exhibit they are proposing and write and deliver a pitch for the Alabama Historical Commission, trying to convince them of the best way to share the story of the Clotilda. Students get the opportunity to show respect for and honor the humans who were brought to America against their will so long ago, strengthen the pride of the remaining descendants who live in Africatown, and to teach others.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Prepare for possible challenges that students may have with particular concepts, as well as for opportunities to make connections to students’ ideas and authentic disciplinary practices as they engage with this unit.

LESSON DRIVING QUESTIONS

Lesson 1:
How are artifacts and stories of past lives uncovered?

Lesson 2:
Why do artifacts of the past matter to people in the present?

Lesson 3:
What should happen to archaeological finds?



Challenges

What are the challenges your students may face in this unit? In this section, you will find guidance and ideas to support your students’ understanding of content and/or practices that might be challenging.

1. Students may face challenges connected to understanding the complexity of slavery and the brutal and extremely difficult experiences that enslaved people endured.

Guidance:

- Review the [6-12th grade framework from Teaching Hard History](#) to prepare yourself for potential topics of discussion or questions.
- Listen to the [Teaching Hard History Podcast](#) to learn about the struggles with teaching about slavery and ways to sensitively address the subject.
- Review the Southern Poverty Law Center’s report on [Teaching Hard History](#), especially the section on [conclusions and recommendations](#).
- Do NOT try “recreating” harrowing and singular historical experiences of slavery in an attempt to foster understanding. This can be traumatizing for students.

2. Students, especially ELL students, may be challenged by reading or understanding the dialect presented in *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo*.

Guidance:

- Draw on students’ knowledge of dialect and how different dialects exist in all regions of the world, prior to reading the Barracoon excerpts.
 - Zora Neale Hurston was known for capturing dialect to show pride in the language, and traditional cultural heritage of rural, Southern blacks.
- See Teaching Tolerance’s article [Everyone has an Accent](#) for examples and suggestions of how to communicate that dialect isn’t a matter of correct speech vs. incorrect speech, but instead, it is a matter of complex rules and patterns.
- Address the myth that dialect is tied to class or intelligence and share major concepts from the *New York Times* article [The Art of the Vernacular](#).

3. Students may struggle to understand the fragility of the Clotilda’s remains and the importance of taking that into consideration when designing a museum exhibit or memorial.

Guidance:

- Share video examples of shipwreck conservation attempts, such as this video from the St. Augustine Lighthouse or some of the excavation or restoration videos from the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum.
- Provide examples of exhibits that don't contain artifacts, like The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or memorials on the water, such as the Pearl Harbor Memorial, to get students thinking about options if they decide the Clotilda is too fragile to exhibit in parts.

Opportunities

What opportunities are present in this unit that you can leverage to create a rich learning environment? Read below to understand how this unit foregrounds students' prior knowledge and experiences and connects to authentic disciplinary practices.

1. While students are probably familiar with the concept of slavery in America, they may not realize that formerly enslaved people once had lives in Africa prior to being kidnapped.
2. Students have the opportunity to read the dialect of Cudjo Lewis and hear the emotion present in his storytelling.
3. This unit presents an opportunity for students to recognize the value of the past for people in the present and the importance of capturing oral social history. It also provides an opportunity to discuss why these artifacts have value to those who were born long after slavery in America was abolished.
4. Students have the opportunity to consider how to preserve the "voices" and culture of communities as they change.

PRACTICE-FOCUSED SUPPORT

Think about your students and their needs. You may want to modify some of the activities in this unit. Leverage the following instructional practices to enhance students' learning and provide opportunities to differentiate, according to the needs in your classroom.

Develop Culturally Responsive Teaching as a Foundation for PBL

Project-based learning provides rich opportunities to value students' cultural knowledge and experiences. This video from [Teaching Tolerance](#) (and related blog post by [Room 241](#)) unpacks culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy. Learn about the social and cognitive benefits for students in the research-based blog by [New America](#). Explore strategies for avoiding potential pitfalls from [STEM Teaching Tools](#) relevant to all disciplines.

Build Empathy and Perspective-taking to Engage Productively During Challenging Discussions

Complex subject matter in both social studies and science can often bring up topics that are challenging to talk about, whether because they are socially controversial or address identity politics. Watch a video from [Edutopia](#) about how active perspective-taking can build empathy during identity-related discussions, distinguish between science versus social controversy with this tip from [STEM Teaching Tools](#), or learn about Structured Academic Controversy at [Teaching Channel](#).

Listening, Making Meaning, and Finding Common Ground Through Socratic Seminars

Socratic Seminar is a discussion strategy for developing authentic conversation skills on specific, text-based topics. Students practice listening, public speaking, and making meaning out of difficult and sometimes controversial content. Core questions that are either teacher- or student-generated focus the discussion, but student dialogue drives the outcome. To learn more about the structure of Socratic seminars, read this [Teaching Tolerance](#) article that provides rationale, procedures, and a sentence stem handout. For more scaffolding options, watch this [Edutopia](#) video that supports teachers in scaffolding sophisticated conversations.

LEVERAGING PBL FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Project Based-Learning (PBL) is a teaching approach in which students gain knowledge and skills by working to investigate and respond to a complex problem or challenge. Driven by the project, students explore a variety of resources that will help them understand essential content and perspectives for tackling the challenge. Student learning is presented in a culminating product that showcases disciplinary skills and knowledge as they apply to a local or global solution. The sections below outline how this unit is guided by a PBL

approach.

Unit Driving Question

How do artifacts and their preservation impact communities?

In this unit, students take on the role of a historian charged with designing and pitching an idea for an exhibit or memorial to the Clotilda and the lives impacted by the ship’s journey across the Atlantic. By learning about the lives of Africans who survived the journey and the power the experience still holds for their descendants, students learn the importance of protecting artifacts and various ways that they can be used to both tell and preserve the stories of the past.

Leading with Engagement

This unit begins by engaging students through eliciting their prior knowledge and introducing an authentic problem and Driving Question. This creates a reason for learning that drives students through the arc of the unit.

1. Students develop the story of an imagined life through organizing images, so they can see how artifacts and evidence work together to weave a story.
2. Then, students discover that the images are related to the real life of Cudjo Lewis, one of the last survivors who arrived on the Clotilda.
3. As students use the words of Cudjo Lewis to connect the story of slavery to a real person, they begin a journey of learning how remains of the sunken slave ship can provide hope and comfort to many descendants who are still alive today.

Learning Together: Collaboration Structures

This unit includes several opportunities for collaboration. Consider the collaboration structures that will work best in your classroom.

1. The first collaboration opportunity is designed for groups of five. Groups translate the dialect of Cudjo Lewis in excerpts from *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo*. Because students may find this dialect difficult to read and interpret, teachers can monitor groups and identify students who may need extra support.

2. There are several opportunities built into the lesson that encourage students to process reading or videos in pairs or small groups to make large chunks of text more manageable.
3. The culminating project is made up of three unique parts: the exhibit sketch, the brochure, and the pitch, so it would benefit students to work in small groups of three. However, based on classroom dynamics, individuals or pairs also could be successful at completing the project.

ENGAGING IN AUTHENTIC PRACTICES AND IMPACTS

Throughout the unit, students engage in authentic disciplinary practices and skills through their project work, enabling them to develop disciplinary expertise and identities. Additionally, consider expanding the impact of students’ learning beyond the classroom by providing opportunities such as the ones listed below.

Disciplinary Skills and Practices:

- Storytelling
- Map analysis
- Organizing information for specific audiences
- Geographical, historical, and cultural contextualizing
- Connecting the past and present
- Understanding regions
- Organizing events in the past

Ideas for Impact:

- [Teaching Archaeology, Conservation, and Preservation in the Classroom](#): Students learn about archaeological practices, especially marine archaeology, and experience cleaning an underwater “artifact” with archaeological tools.
- [StoryCorps](#): Students participate in the StoryCorps project by having and recording meaningful conversations with family or community members that are then archived with the Library of Congress.
- [School Museum Project](#):
 - [Personal Heritage Museum](#): Students work with their families or conduct personal research to develop a personal heritage museum exhibit at their own school highlighting their ancestry with photos, artifacts, and writing.
 - [Our Community Past and Present Museum Night](#): Students research historical information about their

own community and plan for and execute an evening museum with their collective exhibits that are open to the community.

- [Local Archeology Laws](#): Students learn about local laws surrounding archaeological artifacts, and educate others about what they should do if they find something from the past.

Constructing Solutions:

Arc of the Project

In line with the Project-Based Learning approach, project work is structured to unfold over the course of the unit, as students learn content that addresses their questions elicited during the launch of the unit.

[See Table on Page 6]

Assessing the Learning

Units intentionally assess student learning over time, through informal and formal assessments. This table highlights assessments you can use to inform your instruction and ensure students can demonstrate their learning of disciplinary content, skills, and practices.

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CONSTRUCTING SOLUTIONS: ARC OF THE PROJECT

PBL PHASE	ACTIVITY	WHAT STUDENTS ARE DOING
<p>Engagement with an authentic, local problem provides a need to know.</p>	<p>Lesson 1, Activity 1: Meet Cudjo Lewis</p>	<p>Through the life and voice of Cudjo Lewis, students connect with the experience of Africans in America who survived slavery.</p>
	<p>Lesson 1, Activity 2: Finding the Clotilda</p>	<p>Students read about the discovery of the Clotilda so they can better understand the importance of the find and the role of archaeologists working with delicate remains. Then, they watch videos and read about the significance of the Clotilda to the descendants of people who were on the ship’s last voyage.</p>
<p>Relevant knowledge is explored and applied to the problem through disciplinary skills and practices.</p>	<p>Lesson 2, Activity 1: From Benin to Mobile</p>	<p>Students learn about the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the journey the Clotilda took from Benin to Mobile, and how all stories have multiple perspectives. Then, they explore a virtual museum to practice pulling artifacts together to create a story.</p>
	<p>Lesson 2, Activity 2: Ethnography of Africatown</p>	<p>Students learn more about the community of Africatown and its progression from a thriving, self-sustaining community to its current state. They begin to consider the project work and how an exhibit or memorial for the Clotilda could positively impact the community.</p>
	<p>Lesson 2, Activity 3: The Importance of Preserving the Past</p>	<p>Students explore two museums focused on the African American experience and become acquainted with the Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects. Then, they practice putting together a mini exhibit that addresses the standards in preparation for their project work.</p>
<p>Learning is applied to the development of a discipline-appropriate product.</p>	<p>Lesson 3, Activity 1: Traveling Versus Stationary Exhibits</p>	<p>Students explore characteristics of permanent and traveling exhibits. Then, by taking the fragility and uniqueness of the Clotilda into consideration, they decide what type of exhibit to design.</p>
	<p>Lesson 3, Activity 2: Preserving the Clotilda</p>	<p>Students complete the project elements, including the exhibit design sketch, pitch, and tri-fold brochure, and present their written pitch to their classmates as if they were the Alabama Historical Commission.</p>

ASSESSING THE LEARNING

ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITY	SS STANDARD(S) ADDRESSED
<p>Lesson 1, Activity 2: Finding the Clotilda</p>	<p>The Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep sheet and the connected Socratic Seminar assess students’ ideas, and the ability to communicate those ideas, about the words of Cudjo Lewis, the importance of the Clotilda’s discovery, and how it connects to their lives.</p>	<p>D2.Geo.6.6-8 D2.His.6.6-8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1</p>
<p>Lesson 2, Activity 1: From Benin to Mobile</p>	<p>Benin to Mobile: Understanding Perspective assesses students’ ability to see multiple perspectives about slavery and their ability to connect related artifacts to create a photo story.</p>	<p>D2.His.4.6-8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9</p>
<p>Lesson 2, Activity 2: Ethnography of Africatown</p>	<p>Africatown: A Changed Community assesses students’ understanding of what it means to be a self-sustaining community and the factors that influenced Africatown’s ability to remain that way.</p>	<p>D2.Eco.1.6-8 D2.His.1.6-8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9</p>
<p>Lesson 2, Activity 3: The Importance of Preserving the Past</p>	<p>The Slavery Exhibit Planner assesses students’ ability to determine the kind of artifacts that will be helpful in telling a story that represents specific perspectives of a historical era and to gather and interpret information that is relevant and contributes to the topic of slavery.</p>	<p>D1.5.3-5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.2</p>
<p>Lesson 3, Activity 2: Preserving the Clotilda</p>	<p>Use the Sunken Slave Ship: Final Project Rubric to assess students’ ability to analyze multiple factors that influenced people’s perspectives and to organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.</p>	<p>D2.His.4.6-8 D2.His.16.6-8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.4</p>