

RESOURCE LIBRARY
LESSON

Uncovering the Past

Students are introduced to Cudjo Lewis, one of the last survivors of the illegal slave ship, the *Clotilda*, and consider why his story is important to his descendants and others. Then, students investigate details about the *Clotilda* that led archaeologists to a positive identification. Finally, students participate in a Socratic seminar to synthesize their learning and connect it to their lives. This lesson is part of the [Sunken Slave Ship](#) unit.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

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

CONTENTS

2 Activities, 1 Image

ACTIVITY 1: MEET CUDJO LEWIS | 1 HR 40
MINS

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. Invite student teams to interact with images related to the subjects of Cudjo Lewis and slavery to practice and experience storytelling with “artifacts.”

- In groups of three or four, have students look at the collection of artifacts pictured on the *Images from a Past Life* handout.
- Have students cut out the images and arrange them from beginning to end to tell the life story they imagine the pictures represent.
- On an index card, have students write a short paragraph (two to three sentences) for each image that helps to tell the story the group imagined.
- Ask students to glue the image to the top of the index card and string the images along with a piece of yarn or rope with paperclips or clothespins.
- Explain to students that they just created an exhibit memorializing this man's life.
- Ask: *What story did you tell about his life?* Have student groups share the stories they've created.

2. Have students develop questions they would like to ask Cudjo Lewis to better understand the importance of the "artifacts" they have arranged.

- Explain that the stories they told through their exhibits were created without having met or spoken to this man, without knowing how the images related to his life. His name was Cudjo Lewis. His village was raided while he was sleeping, and he was kidnapped from his home in Africa, loaded aboard the *Clotilda* and sold into slavery in Alabama after the transport of enslaved people had already been prohibited.
- Ask: *To tell his story more accurately, what questions might you ask him if you could speak to him now?* List students' questions in a visible location.

3. Introduce students to Cudjo Lewis and the *Clotilda* through images and video.

- Share with students this picture of Cudjo Lewis. As a class, read the first paragraph of the Background Information section.
 - In 1927, author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston took the train from Penn Station, New York, to Mobile, Alabama, to conduct and record a series of interviews with the last known surviving African of the last American slave ship, the *Clotilda*, that traveled from Benin to Mobile with 110 enslaved persons in 1860. Hurston transcribes the story of Oluale Kossola, also known as Kossula or Cudjo(e) Lewis. The interviews and her additional research were put together to form the book, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo."* In 1931, the life of Cudjo Lewis was ready to present to publishers, but they wanted to publish it in standard English rather than Lewis'

dialect. Hurston refused to submit to that type of revision, feeling it was a “vital and authenticating feature of the narrative” and, therefore, it was not published until 2018.

- Students view the segment from *What the Discovery of the Last American Slave Ship Means to Descendants* (0:00-3:16).
 - Ask: *Why is Cudjo Lewis and the discovery of the sunken slave ship Clotilda important to the descendants?*
 - Ask: *Why do you think Africatown has so much meaning to its residents?*
- Guide students in making connections to their own lives. Ask: *If you could ask any of your ancestors a question, what might you ask? How would knowing the answer impact your life now?*
- Explain to students that thanks to Zora Neale Hurston’s interviewing and writing, we actually have Cudjo Lewis’ story in his own words, so his descendants have a better idea of the struggles he went through and how he survived in spite of them.

4. Students discuss a quote from *Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black Cargo”* by Zora Neal Hurston.

- Remind students that *Barracoon* was written in a way that would capture Cudjo's voice, and we call that dialect. When we hear it, we can hear his authentic voice and it reflects his regional history.
- Display the following quote from the book: *“Where is de house where de mouse is de leader? In de Affica soil I cain tellee you ‘bout de son before I tellee you ‘bout de father; and derefore, you unnerstand me, I cain talk about de man who is father (et te) til I tellee you bout de man who he father to him, now, dass right ain’ it?”* (*Barracoon*, pp. 20-21)
- Ask students:
 - *What do you notice about this quote?*
 - *How do you think this person feels about his ancestors? Why?*

5. Discuss dialect with students, translating the quote into standard English.

- As a class, translate each line of the quote from Step 4 into standard English. An example of the final translation might read like: *Where is the house where the mouse is the leader? In Africa, I can’t tell you about the son before I tell you about the father, and therefore, I*

*can't talk about the man who is the father until I tell you about the man who is his father.
That's right, isn't it?*

- Ask: *What power does writing in dialect have for the reader and for the story? Do you feel Zora Neale Hurston was right in refusing to adapt the dialect for the book's publishers?*

6. Students analyze a quote from the Quotes from Barracoon handout to better understand the experiences of Cudjo Lewis and consider how his story might be important for his descendants.

- Divide the class into three groups and distribute one of the three parts of *Quotes from Barracoon* or the modified *Quotes from Barracoon Translated* to each group.
- Distribute a copy of *Quotes from Barracoon Guiding Questions* to each student.
- Have each group member select one quote from the set and analyze it using the guiding questions.
- Have group members share their analysis with one another and together they will select one of the quotes they believe to be the most important to understanding Cudjo Lewis' experience.
- Have one member of the group present the group's selected quote and its analysis to the class.

7. Connect the story of Cudjo Lewis to the power of being part of a team of youth who dive for lost slave ships, and complete an exit ticket.

- Introduce the video by explaining that there is a group called Diving With Purpose that dives in search of sunken slave ships. Many in the group are youth who get great value from searching for evidence of their ancestors' past. The video explains why they do it.
- Play a portion of the video (12:01-18:21) *These Divers Search for Slave Shipwrecks and Discover Their Ancestors.*
- Ask:
 - *How did taking part in these dives impact the lives of the divers? Why is the work worth it to them?*
 - *What did it mean when the divers mentioned how the dive "humanized their stories"?*
- Have students reflect on the activity by responding to an exit ticket question: *Based on what we've seen and learned so far, how does evidence, such as recorded conversations, images, and artifacts, of our ancestors' lives bring meaning into our present lives?*

Modification

Steps 4 and 5: For English-language learners or struggling readers, first provide [Quotes from *Barracoon Translated*](#), an alternative version of the *Barracoon* quotes, to help them understand the message expressed. Then, the original text can be provided and the dialect could be discussed further.

Informal Assessment

***Barracoon* Guiding Questions:** Look for evidence in students' responses that students recognize the difference between primary and secondary sources, as well as a basic understanding of how the transatlantic slave trade was orchestrated and how it impacted the lives of those involved.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Anthropology

- [Archaeology](#)
- English Language Arts

Geography

- [Human Geography](#)

Social Studies

- U.S. History
- World History

Storytelling

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Evaluate information provided in images, videos, and text to explain how it contributes to the lives of enslaved persons in the past and people today.

Teaching Approach

- Project-based learning

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Guided listening
- Multimedia instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- 21st Century Themes
 - Civic Literacy
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Remembering
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Answering Geographic Questions
 - Asking Geographic Questions

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
& LITERACY

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1:

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2:

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9:

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 6-12:

Range of Writing, WHST.6-8.10

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

- 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.6.6-8:

Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

Preparation

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

In 1927, author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston took the train from Penn Station, New York, to Mobile, Alabama, to conduct and record a series of interviews with the last known survivor of the last American slave ship, the *Clotilda*, that traveled from Benin to Mobile, Alabama, with 110 enslaved persons in 1860. Hurston transcribes the story of Oluale Kossola, also known as Kossula or Cudjo(e) Lewis. The interviews and her additional research were put together to form the book, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo."* In 1931, the life of Kossula, or Cudjo Lewis, was ready to present to publishers, but they wanted to publish it in

language rather than dialect. Hurston refused to submit to that type of revision, feeling it was a “vital and authenticating feature of the narrative” and, therefore, it was not published until 2018.

Now, through the words of the last survivor himself, others can learn about the experience of a 19-year-old African preparing for the rites of marriage, whose life took an abrupt turn after tribal secrets of the Takkoi were given away to the Dahomians, a rival tribe, by a disgruntled traitor. These unsuspecting people were ripped from their beds while they were sleeping, forced to watch loved ones murdered with a swipe of a machete, and taken from their homeland. They were herded like cattle in barracoons until the ships were full enough to be monetarily worth the effort, and sold as exported goods to slave runners, even after the slave trade had been outlawed in the United States in 1808.

Prior Knowledge

["Stories have meaning embedded in the language of different cultural groups and regions. Dialects reflect language diversity and the idea that languages change over time. So, the ways in which people spoke or shared stories in their dialect reflect the geography or region from which they came. Though dialects and languages often get translated to be more easily understood, preserving them is also important."]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
African slave trade	<i>noun</i>	(1500-1888) exchange of goods and services from Europe and the Americas in exchange for human beings from Africa. Also called the transatlantic slave trade.
ancestor	<i>noun</i>	organism from whom one is descended.
anthropologist	<i>noun</i>	person who studies cultures and characteristics of communities and civilizations.
captive	<i>adjective</i>	captured or enslaved.
descendant	<i>noun</i>	children, grandchildren, and other offspring.

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
dialect	noun	distinct variation of a language, usually marked by accents and grammar.
enslaved person	noun	person who is owned by another person or group of people.
human trafficking	noun	trade of people for forced labor or sexual exploitation.
legacy	noun	material, ideas, or history passed down or communicated by a person or community from the past.
slavery	noun	process and condition of owning another human being or being owned by another human being.

ACTIVITY 2: FINDING THE CLOTILDA | 1 HR 40 MINS

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. Kick off the activity by having students analyze the conditions African captives endured while traveling on the *Clotilda*.

- Display the top graphic from the article [Finding Clotilda](#) for students.
- Ask: *What do you notice in this image? What questions does this image bring to mind?*
- After discussing the graphic, divide students into pairs and distribute the [Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet](#) student worksheet.
- Explain: *The seminar prep sheet is to help you collect your thoughts and ideas. As you are reading articles or watching videos, it will be helpful to take notes on the preparation sheet so during the seminar, you can refer back to the specific sources we've used.*
- Have the pairs of students read the remainder of the image captions from [Finding Clotilda](#), noting any relevant details on their worksheet.
- After students have finished reading, ask: *What details were known about the Clotilda that could help with its positive identification years after its sinking? List key details from*

students in a visible location, such as on a whiteboard or chart paper.

2. Read *What Tools Does a Marine Archaeologist Use?* as a class to build students' understanding of the field of maritime archaeology.

- After reading, ask: *Which of these tools were probably helpful in identifying and authenticating the Clotilda?* (Possible answers: measuring tools, such as rulers or measuring tapes; the type of wood the boat was made from; length of the boat; height of the hold; the type of metals used; 3D scanners; magnetometers).

3. Engage students in deepening their understanding of the discovery of the *Clotilda* and what it means to the descendants of Cudjo Lewis and other survivors.

- Inform students that they will be viewing a short clip from a video that covers what the findings on the *Clotilda* tell about the stories of the enslaved persons and their descendants.
- Ask students to skim over the questions on their *Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet* and to listen for possible responses to those questions as they watch the video.
- Have students watch until 8:15 of *The Hunt is on for the Last Slave Ship to Arrive in the U.S.* video.
- After watching, have students respond to the relevant questions on their *Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet*.
- Then, have students read NPR's *Alabama Historians Say The Last Known Slave Ship To U.S. Has Been Found* and respond to the questions on their *Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet*.

4. Review the expectations for a seminar discussion, including speaking and listening expectations.

- Prompt students to develop personal speaking and listening goals and write them down on the *Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet*.
- Share expectations for the Socratic seminar, including any participation and behavioral expectations, such as each student should participate at least three times, students should refrain from sidebar conversations, and students should not speak over one another or interrupt. It may be helpful to have expectations posted on the wall for quick reference.

5. Students participate in the Socratic seminar while the teacher facilitates the questions and tracks student participation and responses on the *Seminar Tracking Sheet*.

- Prior to the seminar, list all participating students in the left column of the *Seminar Tracking Sheet*.
- Seminar participants should be seated in a circle with the facilitator/teacher included within the circle. Encourage students to refer to the notes they've taken on their seminar prep sheet throughout the seminar.
- The facilitator poses questions one at a time, giving students time to respond.
- The first question is suggested as a "round-robin" question that everyone should answer to warm participants up to the seminar process.
- Students are encouraged to share their responses, as well as deepen the responses of others by asking clarifying questions, adding to the thoughts of other participants, or respectfully disagreeing with explanations.
- As students participate, record participation and behaviors on the *Seminar Tracking Sheet*.
- Once the discussion on one question begins to lull, move on to the next question.

6. To close, students respond to the Post-Seminar Reflection questions at the bottom of the *Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet*.

- Have students reflect on whether or not they've met their goals and how the learning may impact their own thinking and lives.
- Encourage students who felt unable to share their thoughts during the seminar to write any additional comments they wanted to share in the space provided.
- Collect students' responses.

Tip

Step 5: Provide students with some sort of a counter (chips or cards) to monitor how many times they have participated in the conversation. They can toss their counter in the center of the circle when they participate.

Tip

Step 5: Review the [Socratic Seminar teaching strategy](#) from Facing History and Ourselves, if needed.

Tip

Step 5: To avoid seminar participation challenges, it is helpful to set a class expectation of how many times a student should aim to participate. This can be used as part of the assessment as well.

Modification

Steps 5 and 6: Fishbowl: Students sit in chairs that form an inner circle and an outer circle. Each student in the inner circle is paired up and monitored by a student in the outer circle using a form such as the [Seminar Tracking Sheet](#). Students in the inner circle participate in the seminar first, perhaps addressing only a few questions. Then, students from the outer circle swap places with those in the inner circle and participate in the discussion. This strategy can help manage time and/or split the conversation into two days.

Informal Assessment

Discussion: As students discuss their findings from the video and the readings, clarify any misunderstandings or probe deeper for further learning.

Identification and Authentication Seminar Prep Sheet: As students are working, walk around monitoring their responses. Encourage students to provide additional detail or reasoning where needed.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Anthropology

- Archaeology
- English Language Arts

Geography

- Human Geography

Social Studies

- U.S. History
- World History

Storytelling

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Provide reasoning and evidence when developing answers to open-ended questions.
- Actively participate in a discussion using evidence about historical events and multimedia resources.
- Connect first-person and second-person accounts of historical events to their own lives and the present.

Teaching Approach

- Project-based learning

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Multimedia instruction
- Research

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
 - Media Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- 21st Century Themes
 - Civic Literacy
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Applying

- Remembering
- Understanding

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

ENERGY LITERACY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

- **D2.Civ.10.6-8:**

Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY

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Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2:**

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9:**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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

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

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

- **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.6.6-8:**

Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

Preparation

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

The *Clotilda* was an atypical schooner built by William Foster in 1855. Originally built to transport legally imported and exported goods, changes like extra sails, supplies for people, and wood for sleeping platforms were later added for the illegal transport of human cargo. As a result of the illegal nature of this voyage, great efforts were taken to destroy and hide the remains of the *Clotilda*. However, there were records of the *Clotilda*'s structure and voyages and those, along with today's maritime archaeological tools, helped researchers identify and authenticate the remains of the *Clotilda*.

Prior to the discovery of the *Clotilda* in 2019, other shipwrecks had been discovered in Mobile Bay and on the Mobile River. As a result of the thorough documentation by shipbuilders in the 1800s, archaeologists today are able to use research and tools to eliminate or authenticate archaeological finds. Despite attempts at destroying evidence of its existence, the discovery and authentication of the *Clotilda* has validated the experience of those who survived the illegal voyages, as well as their ancestors.

Prior Knowledge

["The transatlantic slave trade was a part of the global slave trade that transported more than 10 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean from the 16th century until the early 1800s. Enslaved persons were often used as a manual work force on sugar, tobacco, and cotton plantations. In Africa, the slave trade caused devastation on many fronts. Violence erupted between tribes because of economic incentives that were offered to tribes and warlords in exchange for human cargo. It was difficult for tribes to develop economically or agriculturally because of the decrease in population and fear of captivity and enslavement. Most of the people who were taken captive were young men and women, which meant those left behind were typically too old, disabled, or dependent on others to sustain the African economy. The transatlantic slave trade legally ended for the United States in 1808, but as with most prohibitions, some people continued the practice, ignoring new laws and evading punishment."]

Recommended Prior Activities

- [Meet Cudjo Lewis](#)

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
archaeology	<i>noun</i>	study of human history, based on material remains.
artifact	<i>noun</i>	material remains of a culture, such as tools, clothing, or food.
authentic	<i>adjective</i>	real or genuine.
ban	<i>verb</i>	to prohibit or not allow.
legacy	<i>noun</i>	material, ideas, or history passed down or communicated by a person or community from the past.
mast	<i>noun</i>	tall, pole-like structure rising above the top of a ship, where sails and other rigging are held.
nautical archaeology	<i>noun</i>	study of ancient ship construction and use.
preservation	<i>noun</i>	protection from use.
remnant	<i>noun</i>	something that is left over.
schooner	<i>noun</i>	large sailing vessel with at least two equal-sized masts.
scuttled	<i>verb</i>	cut a hole through the bottom, deck, or side of a ship.
vessel	<i>noun</i>	craft for traveling on water, usually larger than a rowboat or skiff.
voyage	<i>noun</i>	long journey or trip.



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