Teaching Tip: Unpacking the Directions and Assigning Handouts

Below are teacher directions that correspond with the linked slides and handouts. Click here for the Spanish translation of the curriculum. All materials can be accessed at resistancemapping.org.

Case Study 1: Africa

Guiding Question: What do we know about Africa and how has our opinion changed from the beginning of the lesson to the end of the lesson?

Case Study 2: Gallery Walk

Guiding Question: How did Black people and their allies resist the horrible conditions of enslavement?

Case Study 3: Common Source Analysis

Guiding Question: How did Black people and their allies resist the horrible conditions of enslavement?

Case Study 4: Jigsaw Source Sets Analysis

Guiding Question: How did Black people and their allies resist the horrible conditions of enslavement?

Case Study 5: Restorative Circle

Guiding Question: What does it feel like to discuss hard history?

Learning Target: I can participate in a community circle to discuss our learning on enslavement and how we feel.

Teacher Resources	Share with Students
Day 5 Case Study Slide Deck for Day 5	Exit Ticket Click here for the Spanish version

Case Study 5: Restorative Circle

Based on a 30–45 minute class.

Guiding Question: What does it feel like to discuss hard history?

Social Studies Framework Reference

4.5 In Search of Freedom and a Call for Change: Different groups of people did not have equal rights and freedoms. People worked to bring about change. The struggle for rights and freedoms was one factor in the division of the United States that resulted in the Civil War.
4.5a There were slaves in New York State. People worked to fight against slavery and for change. Grades K-8 Page 55 Students will examine life as a slave in New York State.

S.S. Practice: Gather, Use, Interpret Evidence - As a whole, these case studies are designed for students to use and interpret primary sources. Making inferences is emphasized as part of this interpretation.

New York State Standards: English Language Arts

4R7: Identify information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text.

Teaching Tolerance Standards

Learning for Justice K-5 Guide to Teaching Slavery
Diversity 10. Students know that the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, is a part of what makes them who they are.

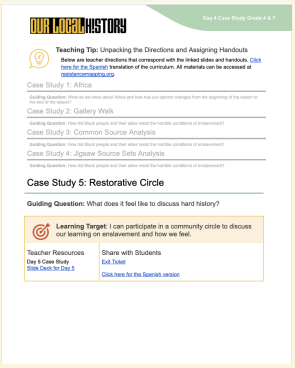
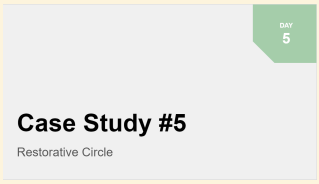
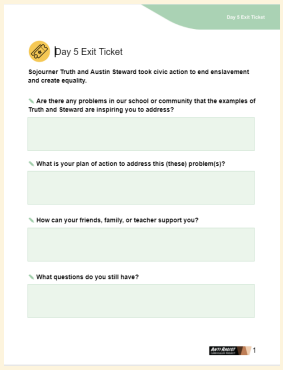
Action 16. Students pay attention to how people (including myself) are treated, and I try to treat others how I like to be treated.

Social Studies Practice: Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence

Overview

Students will explore their thoughts and feelings about enslavement in New York State. Students will have the opportunity to share what they've learned throughout the week as well as questions they still have around enslavement. The purpose of this lesson is to create a safe space for students to explore, express and process their feelings.

Learning Target: I can participate in a community circle to discuss our learning on enslavement and how we feel.

Teacher Resources	Share with Students
 Day 5 Case Study	 [Day 5 Case Study Slide Deck]	 [Exit Ticket]

Sequence of Instruction

Pre-Teaching/Introduction

Consider the following instructional strategies and suggestions as part of this Case Study.

Here are a few key ideas from Learning for Justice's guide to teaching enslavement for students to understand:

14.B Colonists believed that Europeans were a superior civilization and that Christianity was a superior religion.

14.C Ideas about race and skin color developed over time to justify the system of slavery.

14.D False stories about white supremacy that were developed to justify colonialism and enslavement continue to impact people throughout what is now the United States.

Social-Emotional Teaching Tip

Prior to teaching this lesson, please check in with how you are feeling. It may feel difficult to think about having these conversations in the classroom. You may feel nervous about a student saying something offensive or racist. Unfortunately, we cannot control these conversations. When we have checked in with our own feelings and processed our own needs, we have more capacity to hold space for students. You do not need to have all of these answers, you just have to hold space.

It is very important to begin the circle by asking each student to share what they need in order to feel supported but also challenged while discussing the difficult topic of enslavement. It might be helpful to share that enslavement and racism are something many people are uncomfortable talking about, but it is an unfortunate reality of our world. Share that in our class we believe that when we talk about hard things together we bring them out of the darkness and into the light. Hard things like racism are easier to face together rather than alone. We might not do it perfectly, it is ok to have big feelings, it is safe to ask questions, and finally as the great James Baldwin has said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced". When we are uncomfortable is when change happens.

During the circle it is very important to monitor students closely by paying attention to their verbal and physical cues that reveal how they are feeling. It can be helpful to pause the circle and come back to it later. Before the circle, you can assess students when they self-assess how they are feeling about having this conversation using the 'fist to five' strategy (fist-I'm uncomfortable 5-I'm ready to talk about this). When you check in with the students, you can encourage them to cover their eyes or put their heads down so only you can see their hands. This gives students anonymity and provides some safety in sharing. It is important to check in throughout the circle using the same strategy. If a student is putting their head down, struggling with eye contact, or using a low or really quiet voice, offer them space, do not pressure them to share, and be sure to check in afterwards.

2B.2b. Demonstrate how to interact positively with those who are different from oneself.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Tip [Critical Step]

Before talking with students about racism, it is helpful to assess your own comfort level (see p. 20 of The Teaching Tolerance 'Let's Talk' guide). Reflect on the implicit and explicit messages you were taught about racism growing up. Ask yourself "The hard part of talking about race/racism is …The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is …" Then plan for how you will stay engaged. Finally, commit to accepting that you don't have to have all the answers. It is authentic and even helpful to learn with and from your students. It can be very powerful to tell students you do not know an answer, and that together we can explore an answer. Finally, it can be helpful to invite a trusted colleague to facilitate this lesson with you. Ideally, someone who comes from a different background or experience than you.

It is important to consider that students may have strong feelings and emotions when realizing the impact of enslavement on their community. Avoid singling out students of color to share their reactions. Do not assume that all people of color feel the same way or speak for other people of color. If you only have one student of color in your class, it is important to consider partnering with another class that has a student of color so that child isn't the only one. Remind students that it is ok to pass.

This restorative circle is designed to encourage children to learn more about other people's lives and experiences and to know how to ask questions respectfully, listen carefully and non judgmentally (Diversity 8). Each child will have the opportunity to share or pass in the circle about what they know about racism and segregation. It can be very helpful to communicate in advance to students of color about the lesson. Give them permission not to share and also ask them what they need in order to feel supported in the conversation. It is also important to let them know that if a racist idea is voiced by a peer you will be addressing it. Let them know that the goal of the circle will be to help everyone improve our conversations about challenging topics like racism.

Depending on your class it may be helpful to have students write anonymously on sticky notes any questions they have on enslavement, race and racism. Another strategy is to use sticky notes to write questions during the circle. Once the teacher has a number of sticky notes, they can anonymously share the questions and provide the chance for other students to help answer. Students hear many perspectives and opinions at home that are not necessarily true. Giving them the chance to ask about it anonymously without reproach can be really helpful.

It is important to cultivate a classroom rooted in curiosity, of respectful listening and non judgmental questioning (TT Diversity 8).

Class Activity 1/3: Warm Up & Introduction (5 minutes)

Students will analyze the Learning Target for the Case Study (use Slide 3). Teachers can guide this analysis by focusing on words and activities which are embedded in the Learning Target.

Slide 3: Learning Target:

Learning Target: I can participate in a community circle to discuss our learning on enslavement and how we feel.

Slide 4: Let students know that they will be participating in a circle about enslavement. Use the Fist-to-Five strategy to check in with them and see how they are feeling about this. You can quickly gauge a number of things—readiness, mood, comprehension—by asking students to use the "fist-to-five" signal with their hands.

Slide 5: Re introduce the Teaching Tolerance Strategy from day 1 (see p. 9 of 'Let's Talk'): REPEAT•THINK•BREATHE•FEEL Explain these steps as a way to communicate while feeling difficult emotions. These steps won't prevent or change the emotions students may feel, but they can help them self-regulate. Model the strategy with students.

Slide 6: The NYS social studies practice for this lesson is 'civic participation'. Over the last few days students investigated the ways people of color and their allies took civic action to address enslavement. It is crucial to let students know that they have the power to participate in determining how their community is run and the power to address the problems they care about.

Class Activity 2/3: Restorative Circle (30 minutes)

Group Norms 'Supported and Challenged'

Setup: Circle Protocol

Talking piece (only person allowed to talk is the one with the talking piece)

- For virtual circles, invite students to each come with a talking piece that represents safety and strength.
- Create agreed upon circle agreements or norms
- Facilitator goes first and then takes notes
- Create order so kids know when they're speaking
- Facilitator summarizes what everyone said at the end

Slide 7: Introduce students to the restorative circle protocol. Let students know that these group norms will be followed throughout this social studies unit and that the norms can be added to or adapted. Model a group norm that you need in order to feel comfortable and safe during the circle. Then pass the talking piece around the circle. This is your preparation round.

Teaching Tip

It is helpful to use any norms you created with your students on day 1. Still give them the opportunity to make additions or adaptations. Teachers can use the following key ideas as a reference to support your discussion on slide 8.

Key Ideas about Enslavement:

14.A At first, enslavers justified slavery by saying that Africans and Indigenous people were inferior to Europeans because of religious and cultural differences.

14.B Colonists believed that Europeans were a superior civilization and that Christianity was a superior religion.

14.C Ideas about race and skin color developed over time to justify the system of slavery.

14.D False stories about white supremacy that were developed to justify colonialism and enslavement continue to impact people throughout what is now the United States.

Round 1: "What have we learned about enslavement in NY? How have black people and their allies resisted it?"

Slide 8: Introduce the Round 1 question. The facilitator begins by sharing what they learned while teaching about enslavement in NY. Then the talking piece is passed to the next student who has the option to share or pass. It is important that the facilitator offer affirmation to students by quickly reflecting back on what was shared without commenting on it. If a student shares something that breaks the group norms, it is important to gently remind them of the group norms and give them another chance to share. After all the students have shared, the facilitator uses their notes to reflect back what the students shared and highlight the themes and questions that emerged. If necessary the facilitator can make the decision to pass the talking piece back around the circle for a connection round where students can add to what they shared, ask questions, and answer one another's questions. This is not a time for the teacher to answer questions. Instead it is an opportunity for students to make sense of their own lives and tell their own stories. The facilitator demonstrates a posture of curiosity, seriousness, and intention.

Teaching Tip

In answering this question on enslavement in the circle, teachers might draw student attention to recent books, past historical figures, or other topics that have been studied in class as a way to spark student responses and thinking.

Round 2: “Learning about enslavement is tough. What feelings are coming up for you? What questions do you have?”

Slide 9: Introduce the Round 2 question ‘What feelings are coming up for you? What questions do you have?’ The facilitator goes first again and enforces the circle protocol and group norms. After each student shares, the facilitator restates their answers pulling out common themes and questions.

It is important for the facilitator to take the time to honestly answer this question themselves prior to starting this round.

Round 3: “What are some ways we can help ourselves calm down when we are having big emotions?”

Slide 10: Introduce the Round 3 question ‘How can we help ourselves calm down when we are having big emotions?’ The facilitator goes first again and enforces the circle protocol and group norms. After each student shares, the facilitator restates their answers pulling out common themes and questions.

Teaching Tip

Students often have much to share during this circle. If students do not, it is understandable. Do not pressure students to share or make them feel bad for not sharing. Instead reflect on why this might be and on how you can work on building a safe space in your classroom for these difficult but important conversations. It may be helpful to talk to a few students afterward about how they thought the circle went and what ideas they have to foster safety and encourage sharing. It is important to note, when checking in with students, the focus should not solely be on the students of color.

Class Activity 3/3: Check for Understanding (15 Minutes)

Teaching Tip

When students learn about the history of American slavery, they have ample opportunities to explore the many dimensions of civics. First, students should consider the nature of power and authority. They should describe what it means to have power and identify ways that people use power to help, harm and influence situations. Beginning with examples from their classroom, families and communities, students can examine how power is gained, used and justified. Teachers should ask students what makes authority legitimate. As they learn more about the history of slavery, students should begin to understand the layers of U.S. government (local, state, tribal and national) and the idea that rules can change from place to place. Finally, the study of American slavery creates opportunities to learn about activism and action civics. Students should study examples and role models from the past and present, and ask themselves: “How can I make a difference?”

Closing - Check In

Slide 11: Check in with students to see where they are after all three rounds of the restorative circles. Use the Fist-to-Five strategy to check in with them. You can quickly gauge a number of things —readiness, mood, comprehension— by asking students to use the “fist-to-five” signal with their hands. Students may also identify what color zone they are in. If a number of students are responding with low numbers or are in the red zone, consider slide 11 to help students regulate their emotions.

Slide 12: (Optional) Mindful breathing moment. Play the guided video and follow the prompts. Read the quote from Mr. Rogers, “Remember feelings are like clouds. They are all different and always pass.” Thank students for their honesty and willingness to be vulnerable. Talking about difficult topics is hard and they have just demonstrated they can do hard things in life.

Slide 13: (Optional) Read the slide and share the exit ticket with students. Please review the teaching tip above to support students as they think through their exit tickets. Invite students to consider a problem in their school or community that they’re inspired to try and solve. Note that student led civic action projects are best when they are voluntary. For teachers with the capacity and desire to support student led projects this Civic Readiness Rubric (4th Grade) and a real life 4th grade civic action project that incorporates the NYSED Civic Readiness Initiative’s Domains of Civic Readiness is a great place to start. Reach out to swiegand@ccsi.org if you’d like more support.

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