

Module 12: Slavery in America: From the Founding to America's Second Founding

In this module, students will learn how slavery was already a big part of life in America by the time the Constitution was written and how during the Constitutional Convention, delegates made compromises that protected the interests of slaveholders. They will also explore how in the years that followed debates over slavery grew more intense, leading to Abraham Lincoln's election as the first anti-slavery president, the South's decision to break away from the U.S., and the Civil War. Students will also explore America's "Second Founding," the period after the war, when leaders worked to rebuild the country and strengthen the Constitution by passing the nation's first civil rights laws and adding the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. The Google Drive folder for this module, containing the student content guide, worksheets, a vocabulary sheet, the project overview, and transcripts for all videos is [here](#).



Vocabulary

Concept Words – These words will help students understand the big ideas.

- **due process:** the process the government must follow in order to take away anyone's life, liberty, and property
- **emancipation:** the act of setting someone free from control, especially from slavery
- **equal protection:** the idea that laws must treat all people fairly and equally
- **immunities:** special protections or freedoms from certain laws or punishments
- **insurrection:** a violent uprising against a government or authority
- **involuntary servitude:** being forced to work against your will, usually without pay
- **jurisdiction:** the power or authority to make legal decisions in a certain area
- **naturalized:** when someone who was born in another country becomes a citizen
- **Reconstruction:** the time after the Civil War when the U.S. worked to rebuild and reintegrate the states of the Confederacy back into the Union
- **slavery:** a condition of bondage, often where people are forced to work without pay and treated as property

Speed Bump Words – These words can help students better comprehend the text.

- **abridge:** to shorten or limit something, like a right or a book
- **apportioned:** divided and shared among different people or groups
- **citizen:** a person who belongs to a country and has rights and responsibilities there
- **convicted:** found guilty of a crime in a court of law
- **deprive:** to take something away or withhold something
- **enforce:** to make sure a rule or law is followed

- **obligation:** something a person is required to do
- **peculiar:** strange or unusual, or something that is unique to a certain group or place
- **privileges:** special rights or benefits given to certain people

Learning Objectives

- Explore some of the events that led to the Civil War, including debates over the institution of slavery.
- Examine the Supreme Court decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.
- Evaluate the protections contained in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments and how they promote freedom and equality.

Background Information

Below is a list of resources that may help provide you with additional background information on the important concepts presented in this lesson. These are not essential to read or watch before teaching the module, but can support with lesson administration, if necessary.

- There are printable versions of each of the amendments referenced in the Roots of Reconstruction handout linked below:
 - 13th Amendment
 - 14th Amendment
 - 15th Amendment
- Check out additional resources from the National Constitution Center: [Info Brief: Anti-Slavery Movements Throughout American History](#) and [Info Brief: Slavery in America](#).
- You may choose to share additional insight into Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech using [10 Fascinating Facts about the "I Have a Dream" speech](#). The full text of his speech can be found [here](#).

Lesson Structure and Activities

[Student Content Guide](#)

Topic 1: America's "Peculiar Institution"

12.1: Activate Prior Knowledge (5 min)

Students will explore what they already know about slavery in America by agreeing or disagreeing with different statements.

Handout: [12.1: Anticipation Guide](#)

Topic 1: America's "Peculiar Institution"

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| | <p>Activity Type: Individual Reflection</p> <p>Implementation Tips: Students can share their insights as a Think-Pair-Share.</p> <p>Students should watch Unboxing the Constitution - Video One to gain foundational understandings of slavery in America.</p> |
| 12.2: Patrick Henry Explains (20-25 min) | <p>Students will read excerpts from Patrick Henry's famous Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death speech and a letter he wrote to Robert Pleasant. They will answer questions about the meaning of the text based on their readings.</p> <p>Afterward students should watch the Inside the Constitution video to learn even more about the institution of slavery throughout American history. They can use the video notes handout to support their learning during the video.</p> <p>Handout: 12.2.1: Patrick Henry Explains and 12.2.2: Video Notes</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Activity and Video Note-Taking</p> <p>Implementation Tips: For this activity, the text excerpts (particularly the letter to Robert Pleasant) contain challenging words that may make it difficult for students to read. However, vocabulary terms have been added to the handout to help with student comprehension. You may choose to read the excerpts aloud to the class, pair students together, or complete the entire activity as a class.</p> <p>At the end of the activity, you may choose to lead a discussion considering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were some of the debates about slavery? • Why do you think it took so long before the Reconstruction Amendments were added to the Constitution? |
| 12.3: The Long Wait (20-25 min) | <p>In this activity, students will review a timeline and identify events that played a major role in shaping the history of slavery and constitutional changes. Working with a partner, students will brainstorm causes and effects of pivotal events throughout history.</p> |

Topic 1: America's "Peculiar Institution"

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| | <p>Handout: 12.3: The Long Wait</p> <p>Activity Type: Partner Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: Be sure to clarify any misconceptions at the end of this activity.</p> |
| 12.4: Closing Activity (5-10 min) | <p>Students will check in on the Key Question(s).</p> <p>Handout: 12.4: Key Question Reflection</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Reflection</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may ask students to share the words they wrote down to build consensus throughout the class.</p> |

Topic 2: America's "Second Founding"

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| 12.5: Abolition (20-25 min) | <p>Students should watch Unboxing the Constitution = Video Two to gain foundational understandings of the abolition movement and the Reconstruction era.</p> <p>In this activity, students will work with a group to read and take notes on the key details related to the history of slavery in the United States.</p> <p>Handout: 12.5: The Fight to End Slavery</p> <p>Activity Type: Group Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may also choose to assign this as individual or partner work, or use a jigsaw format. Place students in groups of 4. Each group will read one section. After reading, each group will discuss their section and make a list of key points, including both pro- and anti-slavery ideas from their section. Then, students will form new "expert groups" where one member from each section joins a new group. Each student will teach their new group about their original section.</p> |
| 12.6: The Roots of Reconstruction (15 min) | <p>In this activity, students will work with a partner to look for connections between each Reconstruction Amendment and America's founding principles. Students will be asked to read the:</p> |

Topic 2: America's "Second Founding"

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13th Amendment • 14th Amendment • 15th Amendment <p>Handout: 12.6.1: Roots of Reconstruction 12.6.2: 13th Amendment, 12.6.3: 14th Amendment, 12.6.4: 15th Amendment</p> <p>Activity Type: Partner Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may choose to complete this activity as a group or use a jigsaw strategy to cover each of the Amendments.</p> |
| 12.7: Civic Connection: Finding the Dream (10-15 min) | <p>In this activity, students will work with a partner to take a closer look at some text from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to look for connections back to the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.</p> <p>Handout: 12.7: Civic Connection: I Have a Dream</p> <p>Activity Type: Partner Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: Students can share their responses with the class after the activity.</p> |
| 12.8: Reflect (5 min) | <p>Students will revisit the Anticipation Guide and complete the Key Question Reflection.</p> <p>Handouts: 12.1: Anticipation Guide and 12.4: Key Question Reflection</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Reflection</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may choose to have students share their answers to the Key Question(s).</p> |

Module 12 Learning Project: Stories of Freedom: A Student Museum

[Teacher Overview](#)

[Student Instructions](#)

In this activity, students will create a museum exhibit designed to engage visitors in the history of the movement for civil rights, helping visitors experience the past in an exciting and interactive way.

When the museum exhibits are complete, allow students to reflect on what they learned by discussing the following questions with the class. If time allows, consider recording performances or creating a digital archive to share with a wider audience.

Activity Type: Small group

Implementation Tips: In this activity, student groups will prepare and present a museum exhibit. Prior to the project, gather materials that students can use to enhance their exhibits. Additionally, you have the option of completing the project virtually. If you choose to do this virtually, ensure students have access to digital tools for recording and sharing their exhibits.