



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4E:

African American Resistance to Slavery

TOPIC:

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

2. History and Movement
4. Social Movements and Equity

Values and Principles:

2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. (RI.11-12.2)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

Analyze the impact of individuals, groups, and events of the abolitionist movement, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (8.9)

Lesson Purpose

Students will investigate the people, places, and events of Black resistance to slavery.

Essential Questions

What were the people, places, and events of Black resistance to slavery?

How has life changed for African Americans over the last 250 years?

Materials

[The US Constitution, Article 1, Section 2. The Three-Fifths Clause](#)

[PBS: The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850](#)

[PBS: Elizabeth Freeman \(Mum Bett\): Trailblazer for Patriots](#)

[Nat Turner Rebellion](#)

[TED-Ed, The breathtaking courage of Harriet Tubman](#)

[PBS: Frederick Douglass](#)

[Biography: Sojourner Truth—Civil Rights Activist](#)

[United Nations Story, The Secret History of the Underground Railroad](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

Underground Railroad

The Three-Fifths Clause

Fugitive Slave Act

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, let students know that there were additional dehumanizing laws for slaves. Read out loud to the class [The US Constitution, Article 1, Section 2. The Three-Fifths Clause](#). Have students help to create an event card for this and place the card on the timeline. Also, as tensions grew between the slaveholding states and free states after the end of the Mexican American War, questions arose of what to do with new territories—were they slave or free—and how to keep the country from going to war over slavery. In the 1850 Compromise, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. Now, not only did states have their own slave codes, but the federal government was involved in the return of runaway slaves in every state.
- As a class, watch [PBS: The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850](#). Ask students to keep track of the who, what, where, and when so they can help create an event card for the timeline. As a whole class, when the video is complete, ask students why this act inspired such strong feelings from abolitionist whites, free Blacks, slaves, and slaveholding whites? Have students create an event card and post it on the timeline.

Step 2:

- Let students know that in addition to quiet acts of rebellion such as staying married for long periods of time, remembering their family names—even if they weren't allowed to speak them—singing spirituals, etc., Blacks also actively resisted slavery. Many of the slave codes and fugitive slave laws were aimed

at keeping the slaves dependent in order to avoid rebellions. Students will research Black resistance to slavery. Break the class into the following five groups and ask students to create a five-slide slideshow about their person/event. If there was a court case or event, students can create an event card.

- [PBS: Elizabeth Freeman \(Mum Bett\): Trailblazer for Patriots](#) (video 4 minutes, 55 seconds)
- [Nat Turner Rebellion](#) (video 2 minutes, 59 seconds)
- TED-Ed, [The Breathtaking Courage of Harriet Tubman](#) (video 4 minutes, 48 seconds)
- [PBS: Frederick Douglass](#) (video 5 minutes, 19 seconds)
- [Biography: Sojourner Truth—Civil Rights Activist](#) (video 2 minutes, 28 seconds)
- When students have completed their research, have them present their information to the class and add the event card to the timeline.

Step 3:

- Ask students what they already know about the underground railroad and add that to the KWL chart. Have students watch [United Nations Story, The Secret History of the Underground Railroad](#). As students watch the video, ask them to take notes about what they have learned that they did not know before.
- When the video is complete, as a whole class, ask students what they learned. How does the Underground Railroad showcase the ultimate form of resistance by African Americans?

Step 4:

- Ask students to answer this lesson's question, "What were the people, places, and events of Black resistance to slavery?" Also ask, "How has life changed for African Americans over the last 250 years?" Document what has been learned on this unit's KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits, and for homework, ask students to read [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Slave Resistance](#) and view the interactive presentation. Also, students can view [Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly African-American Spirituals](#) (video 3 minutes, 35 seconds). Students should write a short paragraph answering the question, "How did slaves resist the slavery system in their everyday lives?"

Additional Readings and Resources

[Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Slave Resistance](#)

Hummel, Jeffrey R. *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War*, 2nd ed. Open Court, 2014.

Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Abolitionists*. Hachette Books.

[Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly African-American Spirituals](#) (video 3 minutes, 35 seconds)

[Slave Stories](#)

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 183–224.

Sundstrom, Ronald. "Frederick Douglass." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2023 edition. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/frederick-douglass/>

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 4A: KWL Chart

KNOW	WONDER	LEARNED
<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>