



Unit 8 Activities

After the War

The end of the Revolutionary War provided moments of both promise and disappointment for people of African descent, whether they sided with the British or with the Revolutionaries. The purpose of this unit is to provide students with opportunities to investigate these moments and consider how they would have been experienced by the men, women, and children who lived through them.

Aims /Objective

The modular activities and extensions in this unit provide opportunities for students to:

- Examine and make inferences from personal, state, and federal documents regarding slavery, manumission, and citizenship
- Use mapping to consider the experiences of those people of African descent who were evacuated as Loyalists
- Analyze primary and secondary sources and creative writing to draw conclusions about opportunities and challenges for people of African descent in the United States at the close of the Revolutionary War

Materials

Big Idea 8: After the War

Finding Freedom Sources:

- Interactive: All Stories (Andrew, Deborah, Eve, Jack, London)
- Primary Source: Runaway Ad for Eve (Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary)
- Primary Source: Birch Pass (Passport for Cato Ramsay to emigrate to Nova Scotia, 21 April 1783; NSA, Gideon White fonds, MG 1 vol. 948 no. 196)

Other Resources:

- Handout: Questions for Reading (Included)
- Handout: Questions for Reading Answer Key (Included)
- Handout: *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, 1780* (Pennsylvania) (Included)
- Handout: Excerpt from *George Washington's Last Will and Testament, 1799* (Note: Original images can be seen here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/sites/circuit/files/assets/documents/pdf/george-washington-will.pdf>.)
- Handout: Excerpts from Federal Documents, 1787, 1790, 1795 (Included)
- Worksheet: Interview a Historical Figure (Included)

Procedures

Note: Please be aware of the environment you and your students create when discussing the experiences of people of African descent, particularly enslaved people. This can be an emotional topic with the power to create lasting memories for students of all backgrounds, particularly those who continue to experience racism in the present.

Engagement

SMALL PAPERS, BIG IDEAS

Display or project images of both the Birch Pass given to Cato and the runaway ad placed by Harrison Randolph for Eve for all students to view. Explain that the Birch Pass granted Cato passage on any of the British ships evacuating Loyalists out of New York City at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Ask students how they believe these documents relate to one another. Note that we do not know if Eve and Cato ever met one another, but that both clearly spent time with the British at some point during the war. Ask: What do these documents suggest about the experiences of freedom-seekers who ran to the British?

BUILDING BLACK INSTITUTIONS 5-10 minutes

Begin your discussion by informing students that in the years during and after the Revolutionary War, people of African descent in the colonies began to officially organize their own churches and mutual aid societies. (The latter functioned something like small insurance companies — members of the community all contributed, and when a participant faced difficult circumstances, like the death of a family member, the mutual aid society provided financial assistance.)

Some examples include: the Free African Society (Philadelphia, 1787), Free African Society (Boston, 1787), Free African Union Society (Newport, RI, 1780), First African Baptist Church (Savannah, GA, 1773/1788), Free Dark Men of Color (Charleston, SC, 1791)

Ask students: Why do you think these institutions were founded at this moment in time? Do you think they were responding to positive forces, negative forces, or both?

EXTEND: Have students select and research an early support organization created by people of African descent. Have them create a collage or presentation board communicating what they learned.

Development

A NATION IN FLUX 45 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Review Big Idea 8: After the War. Make sufficient copies of George Washington's Last Will and Testament, An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, and "Excerpts from Federal Documents" handouts for distribution based on breakdown of class into groups.

Divide students into 3 groups (or any multiple of 3). Distribute the text *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, 1780 (Pennsylvania)*, *George Washington's Last Will and Testament*, and "Excerpts from Federal Documents" to students, one document per group. Discuss the authorship and purposes of each document. Explain to students that their task as a group is to read these documents to develop an understanding of what they may tell us about feelings regarding slavery in the new United States. Distribute to each group a copy of the Questions for Reading handout and explain to them that they can use this this document to help guide their examination of their document.

Once all groups are finished or adequate time has passed, bring groups together to review and share out. Groups who are not presenting should take notes based on other groups' presentations. As groups are discussing, use the answer key to help inform the conversation. Discuss:

- What do these documents tell us about perceptions of slavery in the new United States?
- What do these documents tell us about the possibilities and opportunities for free and enslaved people of African descent in the new United States?

EXTEND: Have students read Big Idea 8: After the War, then write a reflection paper synthesizing their thoughts from this activity and the Big Idea overview.

MAPPING LOYALIST MOVEMENTS

20-30 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Review Big Idea 8: After the War. Familiarize self with Google Maps “My Maps” feature OR print out basic copies of a world map on which students can write.

Have students read Big Idea 8: After the War, focusing on the section titled “Loyalist Evacuation.” Ask students to plot on their map each of the cities and/or countries to which Loyalists of African descent were transported as the war concluded. Discuss:

- What are your observations about this map?
- Do you think the passengers knew a lot about the places to which they were traveling before they boarded their ships? Do you think they had ever been to those places before?
- What do you think it was like to arrive in and try to build a home in a place that might have been very different from the homes they’d left behind? What challenges do you think they faced?
- What do you think it was like for the people who left as freemen to travel with enslaved people who were leaving as the property of white Loyalists?

DEEPEN: Students can also view a copy of the “Book of Negroes” (found here: <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africans/BN.asp>) as they complete this exercise.

Extensions and Adaptations

TRUTH OR FICTION, TRUTH IN FICTION?

Play for students, or otherwise arrange for them to watch, the 6-part miniseries, *The Book of Negroes*, based on the novel by Lawrence Hill. (Note that there are depictions of violence and sexual assault. Choose what is most appropriate for your students to watch.) Afterwards, have students select a moment, aspect, or person from the series — the role of a “jeli” in keeping family stories alive, experiences in the slave pens along the West African coast, Samuel Fraunces and Fraunces Tavern, anti-Black behaviors in Nova Scotia, etc. — that is of particular interest. Have them research their topic through primary and secondary sources, and produce a creative presentation comparing the real story or person to the fictional representation in the miniseries.

Culmination

INTERVIEW ANDREW Project

Teacher Preparation: Review Andrew’s story in the Finding Freedom interactive and the Finding Freedom Map, as well as his packet of Primary Sources. Ensure that students have access to these materials, through computers or tablets with a working internet connection and/or by also printing out Andrew’s Primary Source packet. Make copies of the Interview a Historical Figure worksheet.

Review with students what they have already learned about Andrew through earlier explorations of the *Finding Freedom* interactive. Tell students that their role today is to use Andrew’s primary sources to conduct an “interview” with him across time and space. Their goal is to imagine and record — based on the available primary sources — answers to the questions on the *Interview a Historical Figure* worksheet, which focus on Andrew’s life after the War. Distribute worksheet. Students should also make use of the *Finding Freedom* Timeline and any other resources that will help put Andrew’s story in historical context, based on the year in which they choose to “interview” him. Responses should be as specific as possible to Andrew’s particular experiences.

EXTEND: This activity can also be done with any of the other *Finding Freedom* primary historical figures.

MODERN WORDS, HISTORICAL PEOPLE

The United Nations Refugee Agency has specific definitions for refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and asylum seekers, found here: <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/> Share these definitions with students, then ask them to decide which, if any, apply to each of the individuals in *Finding Freedom*, and if so, why. Do these contemporary words and definitions help us to better understand the experiences of those in the past? Why or why not?

BACK TO AFRICA?

In 1811, merchant and sailor Paul Cuffe (or Cuffee) founded the Friendly Society of Sierra Leone, creating the first back-to-Africa movement led by people of African descent in the United States. He organized with other prominent African American leaders and eventually transported a ship of volunteers to Sierra Leone — a place they had never been. Ask students to research the history of the Friendly Society, Paul Cuffe's leadership of it, the historical context of the moment in which it was founded, and why the movement ultimately lost the support of free people of African descent. What does it tell us about hopes and fears of people of African descent about a quarter of a century after the end of the Revolutionary War?

THE RETURN HOME

Soldiers went to war for complicated reasons, but most returned home hoping that their service would equal better opportunities in life. Ask students to research what life was like for soldiers of African descent returning home from any of the military conflicts after the Revolutionary War. How were their experiences similar to and different from those of the soldiers of African descent returning home after the Revolutionary War?

HISTORY NEAR YOU

Have students research the formation of the earliest community of people of African descent in or near your town. Ask them to prepare a report — as a newspaper article or recorded journalistic presentation — exploring when the community was formed, where it was located, why it was formed, who the earliest members were, at least 3 interesting facts about it, and how the formation of that community relates to the American Revolution or its ideals.