Slavery In Brooklyn:

Oppression and Resistance

**Part I.**

**Framework of the Unit Study**

**Grade:** 4th

**Topic:**

Slavery in Brooklyn

**Theme:**

Oppression and Resistance

**Description:**

Through this unit, students will be learning about the prevalence of slavery in Brooklyn. They will first learn about the institution of slavery, focused strongly on its’ existence in Brooklyn through discussions, read-alouds, and trips. The students will then move into discussing slavery as oppression and looking at different ways that enslaved persons resisted that oppression. There is a strong emphasis on the Underground Railroad as an example of a collective resistance to slavery, but there is also a focus on other methods of individual resistance such as writing. Through this unit, the students will be exposed to the treatment of enslaved persons, the Underground Railroad, the daily life of an enslaved person, amongst other topics that will force the students to think about, question, and evaluate their previous thoughts on slavery. The goal of this unit is to have students realize that slavery did exist in the North, and in fact it existed right where they live, and to have students see slavery as an oppression that was resisted by many.

**Standards:**

**1. Scope and Sequence Standards**

Grade 4, Unit 3: Colonial and Revolutionary Periods: Life in the New York Colony

-Role of enslaved Africans in growth and development of New

York

- Social, economic, and political conditions of diverse New York communities (Africans) before the war.

-Important accomplishments of individuals and groups in New York

**2. NCTM Math Standards: Measurement 3-5**

- understand such attributes as length, area, weight, volume, and size

of angle and select the appropriate type of unit for measuring each

attribute;

- understand the need for measuring with standard units and become

familiar with standard units in the customary and metric systems

**3. ELA Common Core Standards:**

**Writing:**  -4.W.3: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory

details to convey experiences and events precisely.

-4.W.9 Research to build and present knowledge

**Speaking and Listening:**

-4.SL.3 Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points

**Reading:**

**-**4.RIT.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text

-4.RIT.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain

how it is supported by key details; summarize the text

-4.RIT.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and

domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a

grade 4 topic or subject area

4.RL.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when

explaining what the text says, explicitly when drawing inferences from a text.

**-**4.RL.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text

**-**4.RL.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing oncspecific details in the text (e.g. a character’s thoughts, words or actions)

-4.RL.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as

they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g. Herculean).

-4.RIT.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally,

or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text

**4. Arts Standards:**

Standard 4: Students will develop an understanding of personal and

cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in

turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

**Enduring Understandings:**

1. Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in Brooklyn.

2. Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression, both individually and collectively.

**Essential Questions:**

1. Why did slavery exist in the Northeast, and more specifically in

Brooklyn?

2. What did slavery look like in the North, including Brooklyn.

3. What does it mean to be oppressed?

4. In what ways did enslaved persons resist the oppression of slavery?

**Part II.**

**Thematic Brainstorm**

**Part III**

**Unit Map**

**Day 1:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus**: What oppressions might we feel in our lives? This lesson will serve as an opener to the language of slavery – how do we talk about enslaved people? What is slavery?

**Activity:** Discussion on what oppression is, and what is slavery?

**Day 2:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Slavery existed in Northeast, more specifically Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What did slavery look like in the Northeast, more specifically Brooklyn?

**Focus**: What questions do we have about slavery? What do we know about slavery in Brooklyn?

**Activity:** KWL chart about what we already know about slavery.

**Day 3:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus:** When did slaves come to Brooklyn? What role did they have in society? What proof do we have that slaves were in Brooklyn?

**Activity:** Students will read the New York Times article “To Be a Slave in Brooklyn” and complete a new vocabulary worksheet.

**Day 4:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus**: What were the lives of enslaved peoples like compared to the lives of their masters?

**Activity:** In this lesson students will compare the lives of enslaved people to their masters and make inferences about how they might feel in that situation.

**Day 5:**

**Enduring Understanding:** - Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in the microcosm of Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus:** What was the slaves’ lifestyle like?

**Activity:** The students will research on the computer to find out more about slaves’ everyday lives.

**Day 6:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in the microcosm of Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus:** What determines a person’s worth?

**Activity:** Students will look at primary sources that show the sales receipts of slave trades and think about possible ways of resisting this unfair practice. Students may discuss how it seems masters determined their slaves’ worth.

**Day 7:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in the microcosm of Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What did slavery look like in the North?

**Focus**: What role did child enslaved persons have?

**Activity:** Students will watch video to learn about enslaved children as well as read an article. Students will then discuss their role and do a perspective writing piece imagining that they were an enslaved child.

**Day 8:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus**: How do we view the oppressed?

**Activity:** Students will look at a drawing of “Pink” and make observations, then learn that there is more to her than meets the eye.

**Day 9:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What are the ways enslaved persons resisted oppression?

**Focus:** How did an enslaved person individually resist the oppression of slavery?

**Activity:** Read-Aloud of “Henry’s Freedom Box”. Students will reflect and write about the question “What challenges will Henry face now that he is free?”

**Day 10:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What are ways that enslaved persons resisted oppression.

**Focus:** What is the Underground Railroad? What do we know and want to know about the Underground Railroad?

**Activity:** KWL chart on the Underground Railroad. Make text connections with Henry’s Box.

**Day 11:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression, people find ways to resist oppression both individually and collectively.

**Essential Question:** In what ways did the enslaved persons resist the oppression of slavery?

**Focus:** How far did enslaved people travel to freedom?

**Activity:** The students will measure the distances from the agricultural area of Brooklyn (Lott Farmhouse area) to Brooklyn Heights (Plymouth Church area). They will then measure the distance from New York City to Canada to see how far the enslaved often traveled to reach their freedom.

**Day 12:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collectively.

**Essential Question:** What are ways that enslaved persons resisted oppression?

**Focus:** How did making a quilt provide access to a way out of oppression?

**Activity:** Students will engage in a read-aloud of “Show Way” and make a classroom quilt that can be used as a map.

**Day 13:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collectively.

**Essential Question:** What are ways that enslaved persons resisted oppression?

**Focus:** Are quilts still believed to be a way in which the enslaved persons escaped to freedom?

**Activity:** Students will read an abridged version of a *New York Times* article that discuses this issue. They will discuss if they believe quilts were used as maps.

**Day 14:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in Brooklyn.

**Essential Question:** What did slavery look like in the North, more specifically Brooklyn?

**Focus:** What mysteries does the Lott House hold?

**Activity:** Students will determine if the Lott house was a stop on the Underground Railroad based on an article and picture analysis.

**Day 15:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collectively.

**Essential Question:** What are ways that enslaved persons resisted oppression?

**Focus:** How did members of the community help to fight against slavery?

**Activity:** Students will travel to Plymouth Church to see, experience, and hear about the activity of the Underground Railroad there and the interesting history of the church and connect this with what they know about the Lott house.

**Day 16:**

**Enduring Understandings:** Under oppression, people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collectively.

**Essential Questions:** What are ways that enslaved people resisted oppression?

**Focus:** How were songs used as both an individual and collective resistence to slavery?

**Activity:** Students will listen to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” and “Caanan”. They will analyze these songs and discuss their purposes. They will then write their own songs that secretly dictate the way to their homes.

**Day 17:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus:** What ways did the enslaved persons resist oppression?

**Activity:** The students will fill in the L portion of the KWL charts. They will then receive an introduction to theater of the oppressed and use this to acto out scenes to show the class how enslaved persons resisted their oppression.

**Day 18:**

**Enduring Understanding:** Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:** What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Focus:** What ways can we resist oppression today?

**Activity:** The students will discuss where and how they see or experience oppression in their lives. They will write scenes in groups and perform these instances of oppression for the class.

Sample Learning Experiences

Part IV

Francesca Needham

**Day 5: Treatment of Slaves: Looking at enslaved people compared to their slavemasters**

**Enduring Understandings:**

Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in the microcosm of Brooklyn

**Essential Questions:**

What did slavery look like in the North, more specifically Brooklyn?

What does it mean to be oppressed?

**ELA Common Core Standards:**

4.W.9 Research to build and present knowledge

4.SL.3 Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points

**Scope and Sequence Standards:**

**Grade 4, Unit 3:**

Role of enslaved Africans in growth and development of New York

**Objective:**

Students will look at a variety of photographs from the time period to observe and make inferences about the differences between the enslaved people and their masters

**Materials:**

Photograph packet from the time period (attached sample)

Note taking graphic organizer (attached)

**Procedure:**

1. On the smartboard, show the class the photograph of Eliza Lefferts. Ask, “what is she wearing?” “what type of room is she standing in?” and so on

2. Have students record observations about Eliza Lefferts on their graphic organizer

3. Show a photograph of enslaved farmhand. Ask the same questions

4. Have students record their observations on the graphic organizer

5. Do they look similar? Think about their facial expressions, their body language – what does that tell us about the people in the photographs? What do you think they were thinking?

**Independent work:**

Have students look at a variety of other photographs and fill out their graphic organizers. Make sure the students note their clothing, posture, facial expression, background, etc…

**Differentiation:**

Some students will receive graphic organizers with parts already filled in – such as facial expression, leaving the students only to make the more concrete connections to the photograph, not the abstract. Students may also work in collaborative partnerships.

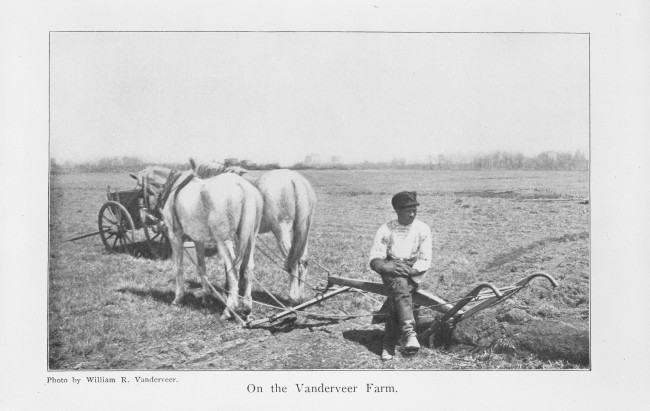
**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on completion of graphic organizers and participation in class discussion, as well as informal observations from the teacher.

**Next Steps:**

Students will have made observations about the differences between the enslaved people and their masters, which they will use to discuss the next day’s lesson – the pricing of slaves – to further their understanding of oppression and its effects as well as begin to see the role that enslaved people played in the economics of the time period.

Photo of an enslaved worker:



#### Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is this person wearing?

What is their facial expression?

Where are they?

Think: What do you think they feel like?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Clothing | Facial Expression | Place |
| Man on the Vanderveer Farm |  |  |  |

Eliza Lefferts:



#### Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is this person wearing?

What is their facial expression?

Where are they?

Think: What do you think they feel like?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Clothing | Facial Expression | Place |
| Eliza Lefferts |  |  |  |

Evi Panagides

**Day 8: “Pink”**

**Audience/Organization**:

Fourth grade, whole class lesson

**Essential Questions**

What did slavery look like in the North, including Brooklyn.

What does it mean to be oppressed?

**Enduring Understanding:**

Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression, both individually and collectively.

**Standards**

ELA

4.RIT.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

4.RIT.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text

4.RIT.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area

**Social Studies**

Grade 4, Unit 3: Colonial and Revolutionary Periods: Life in the New York Colony

-Role of enslaved Africans in growth and development of New York

**Objectives:**

-Students will examine a drawing of “Pink” and her bill of sale.

-Given Pink’s background story and her bill of sale, students will have a group discussion based on their observations and inferences.

**Materials**

“Pink” etching

Bill of Sale, original and transcribed

Smartboard

whiteboard

**Procedure**

* On the smartboard, show the class the etching of “Pink”, only telling them that she is a child from 1860.
* On the whiteboard, create two columns “What I See” and “What I think”. Allow them to write down their observations in their social studies notebooks.
* Solicit observations and inferences from the class, writing down what students say on the whiteboard.
* Separate students into small groups. Distribute the Bill of Sale, original and transcribed to the class. Instruct students to read, discuss new vocabulary, and summarize the document in a few sentences. Give them 10 minutes to do so.
* Draw students back for a whole class discussion. Were they surprised to learn that the child was a slave? Why or why not? Explain that “Pink” was only 1/16th African, and yet was still considered black although she was as “white as any child of Beecher’s church members (Livingston, E.A., President Lincoln’s Third Largest City: Brooklyn and the Civil War, p. 52, 974.723 L)
* Mrs. Rose Ward, “Pink,” returned to Plymouth Church 67 years later, married to a prominent Washington attorney. Her life might have been very different if not for Beecher and his congregation. Ask students to imagine how her life might have been had Beecher not intervened on her behalf.

**Independent Work**

Students will choose one of the two writing assignments:

* Imagine you are the slave girl “Pink,” about to be sold away from your grandmother. Write a diary entry about how you feel.
* Imagine you are Beecher presenting “Pink’s” case to his congregation. Write a speech to convince them to give the money needed to buy her freedom.

**Differentiation**

* Students with visual problems get enlarged versions of the transcription.
* Length of writing assignments can vary. Students may write more or less depending on ability.
* Dirctions will be given orally and written on the whiteboard.
* Topics will be written on the whiteboard.

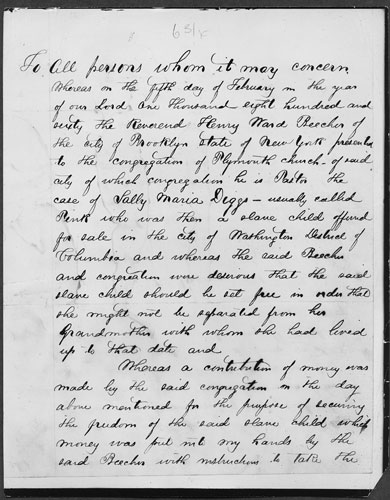
**Assessment**

* Writing assigment will serve for assessment responses.
* Students can fill out the “
* graffiti wall” at the end of the lesson.

Pink Etching:



Bill of Sale:



Michelle Fiumefreddo

**Day 11: Measuring the Underground Railroad: How far did enslaved people travel to freedom?**

**Enduring Understanding:**

Under oppression, people find ways to resist oppression both individually and

collectively.

**Essential Question:**

In what ways did the enslaved persons resist the oppression of slavery?

**Scope and Sequence Standards:**

4.3: - Social, economic, and political conditions of diverse New York communities (Africans) before the war.

**NCTM Math Standards: Measurement 3-5**

- understand such attributes as length, area, weight, volume, and size of angle and select the appropriate type of unit for measuring each attribute;

- understand the need for measuring with standard units and become familiar with standard units in the customary and metric systems

**Objective:**

**-**Students will measure the distance from Marine Park Brooklyn (Lott Farmhouse) to Brooklyn Heights (Plymouth Church) accurately using the scale.

- Students will measure from Manhattan to Canada accurately using the scale.

**Materials:**

-Map of the United States

- Map Worksheets

-String

- Scissors

**Procedure:**

- Have the students sit together and remind them of the previous day’s lesson on “what is the Underground Railroad”.

-Remind the students that enslaved persons were not treated respectfully therefore they were oppressed. Ask the students to share ways in which the enslaved were mistreated.

- Remind students that in order to escape the oppression they were exposed to, some of them joined together and journeyed further North towards Canada where they could be free from the oppression of slavery.

- Tell the students that they will be measuring the distances from the agricultural section of Brooklyn, where many enslaved people worked to the Plymouth Church, where many enslaved persons were housed on their journey to freedom. They will be measuring the distance using the scales found on the maps with string in pairs.

- Send the students off in pairs to measure the distance from the Lott farmhouse area to Brooklyn Heights, then from Manhattan to Canada.

- Have the students record, return to the meeting area, and share their answers.

-Explain how the distance is great using concrete example (Manhattan is only 12 miles long, 1 mile is 20 blocks, ect.)

-Ask students how they would feel traveling all that distance.

**Differentiation:**

For students who are struggling with measurement, have them use a straw, cut to fit the exact scale of the map. This will not bend as much when they are measuring the distance. For ELL student needs before the lesson offer the student “new words” they should be looking for, (ex. Enslaved person, Underground Railroad, Scale) Translate these words into their native language, so they can make meaning of the new words.

**Assessment:**

The students will be completing a worksheet that will serve as an assessment. Student responses and conferences during independent work will also serve as an informal assessment.

**Next Steps:**

The next lesson will be focused on a reading of a book “Show Way”, which describes a family that uses quilts as maps. This answers the question of “How did they find their ways on this journey?”

PUT MAPS HERE

Put maps here

Evi Panagides

**Day 12: “Show me the Way”**

**Audience/Organization**: Fourth grade, whole class lesson

**Enduring Understanding:**

Under oppression people find ways to resist the oppression both individually

and collaboratively.

**Essential Question:**

What are ways that enslaved persons resisted oppression?

**Standards**

ELA Common Core:

4.RL.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text

says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

4.RL.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama,

drawing on specific details in the text (e.g. a character’s thoughts, words or

actions)

4.RL.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a

text, including those that allude to significant characters found in

mythology (e.g. Herculean).

Arts:

Standard 4: Students will develop an understanding of personal and cultural

forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the

diverse cultures of past and present society.

**Objectives:**

-Students will analyze and understand the characters’ motivation for sewing

quilts.

-Students will understand what the quilt represents to people who were

previously enslaved fleeing north.

- Students will make their own quilts of the classroom, showing the way to escape.

**Materials:**

Show Way by Jacqueline Woodson

whiteboard

index cards

scissors

markers

crayons

glue or tape

**Procedure**

* Begin by explaining to the class that oral tradition says that enslaved people often used quilts, also called Show Ways, to escape to the north.
* Make a KWL chart on the whiteboard on Show Ways and elicit responses. What have they heard, if anything, about Show Ways? What would they like to know?
* Begin the read-aloud on Show Way.
* As the read-aloud progresses, stop to ask questions. How do they think Soonie felt about being sold? What is the “trail to the north?” How was the Show Way created?
* When the read aloud is finished, discuss the story with the students. How does a show way tell a story? What is another word for show way?What do they think the significance of these quilts was?

**Activity**

After the read aloud, students will have the opportunity to make their own classroom quilt. Using index cards, students will decide on different symbols to represent different areas of the classroom. They will draw out these symbols onto index cards and glue or tape all of them together to form a quilt. The quilt will represent the way to ‘‘escape” from our classroom.

**Assessment**

Their comments and answers to questions during the read aloud are used as informal observations.

Observe students as they work on their quilts.

**Differentiation**

Write down terms and phrases on the whiteboard and highlight for students what they need to know.

Allow students to decide for themselves what their symbols should be; they can be as complex or simple as they like.

**Next Step**

The following day, a discussion will supplement this lesson on the validity of quilts. Did they exist? Is it simply folklore? Students will have the opportunity to conduct research on the subject and will discuss their findings.

Francesca Needham

**Lesson 14: The Lott House and Its Mysteries**

**Enduring Understanding:**

Slavery existed in the Northeast, more specifically in the microcosm of Brooklyn.

**Essential Questions:**

What did slavery look like in the North, more specifically Brooklyn?

**ELA Common Core Standards:**

4.RIT.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text

4.RL.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text

4.RIT.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text

**Scope and Sequence Standards:**

Social, economic, and political conditions of diverse New York communities before the war.

**Objective:**

Students will read a newspaper article to find out more about the history of the Lott House, and learn about their slaves in New York.

**Materials:**

Lott House photograph (attached)

*Park Slope Courier* article “Archaeologists Uncover Secret Lott House Rooms”

Chart paper

**Procedure:**

1. Look at the Lott House photograph on the smartboard. Tell the class that the house in this picture holds many secrets – what could they be?

2. Record student guesses and observations

3. Read article out loud to the class, stopping at key points to make observations and ask questions

4. After reading the article – what are the two secrets of the Lott House? What proof is there that the Lott House was probably a stop on the Underground Railroad?

5. Share, class discussion

**Independent Work:**

Choose one of the following writing prompts:

If the Lott House could talk, what would it tell us about the Lott family and their slaves?

Thinking about the rooms, furniture, clothing, games, etc… in a house – what do they reveal about the person who lives there? If someone were to enter your bedroom right now, could he or she guess who lives there? How?

**Differentiation:**

Struggling students may receive a shorter text version of the article, or work with a partner to be the scribe to write down important information from the article.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on their writing prompts as well as their responses in the classroom discussion. Teacher will circulate to make informal observations about students’ progress.

**Next Steps:**

The next day, students will learn about another Brooklyn landmark that once sold slaves – the Plymouth Church, and will make connections between the two seemingly innocuous looking places and their dark pasts compared to their present-day states.



**Article:**

From: *The Park Slope Courier*, May 14, 2001, p. 21.

**ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVER SECRET LOTT HOUSE ROOMS** by Helen Klein

It takes care, patience, and more than a little passion to pry the secrets from an old house.

In the case of the Hendrick I. Lott House, a pre-Revolutionary homestead nestled on a quiet residential street in Marine Park, the secrets revealed through an ongoing investigation of the structure—under the auspices of the Brooklyn College Archaeological Research Center (BC-ARC), directed by Professor Arthur Bankoff—include not one, but two secret areas.

One is believed by archaeologists to have been old slave quarters. The other hidden room may have been used as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

The news has reverberated through the archaeological world, clearly validating the heroic efforts by community members to save the structure, which, despite its designation as a landmark in 1989, had been precariously poised on the brink of destruction until 1998.

It was then that the Campaign to Save the Lott House, a public/private partnership of the Historic House Trust of New York City, New York City Parks and Recreation, and the Lott House Preservation Association, was launched with the goal of purchasing the house and restoring it as a community resource.

Even before the momentous discoveries had been made, it was clear that the Lott House, which is located at 1940 East 36th Street, was indeed a rare gem. Dating back in its oldest section to the 1720s, it is one of only 14 such structures surviving today in Brooklyn.

It is also incredibly pristine for a house that is approximately 280 years old. Because, over the years, little had been done to modernize the house, many layers of history still remain virtually untouched within the venerable dwelling which eight generations of the same family called home, until 1989, when its last inhabitant, Ella Suydam, a descendant of Hendrick Lott, died.

According to archaeologist Christopher Ricciardi, project manager at the Lott House excavations, the Lott family’s ownership of the home represents “the longest continuous ownership of property in New York City by one family.”

Now, the amazing finds at the house have focused the spotlight of attention on the efforts of the team working there, efforts detailed recently in the May/June issue of *Archaeology* magazine.

The Lott family certainly had slaves, as many as 12 at one point, according to Ricciardi. “This,” he said, “made them one of the largest slave owners in the area.”

However, added Ricciardi, “We know they freed most of their slaves by 1801, 25 years before New York State did away with slavery, so we can make the assumption that these are early abolitionists.

“They then hired their former slaves on as paid servants,” Ricciardi continued, “who were still working for the family during the 1840s, when the Underground Railroad was at its height.”

This information supports the theory that a tiny space—literally a closet within a closet, its door cunningly hidden behind coat hooks that would have held a curtain of garments—might well have been a way station for escaping slaves.

So does anecdotal evidence provided by family members. Ricciardi said that two different descendants of the Lott family, who didn’t know each other, both recalled the same story when given tours of the old homestead. “They said this was where they kept their runaway slaves,” he noted.

“We know,” Ricciardi said, “that the Underground Railroad ran in Brooklyn. One branch ran from Staten Island to Brooklyn to Queens to the Bronx, then to Westchester, Albany, and further north. It avoided Manhattan island, because Manhattan supported the south for economic reasons.

“Any house in the north that existed prior to the Civil War claims to be a stop on the Underground Railroad,” Ricciardi acknowledged. “It’s sort of like saying, ‘George Washington slept here.’

“But,” he went on, “when you take the circumstantial evidence of two people who didn’t know each other, and you take the fact that the family freed its slaves 25 years before they were required to, and that those people were still working here, in the 1840s, as paid servants, you can say, ‘It might have been.’”

Another World

The old slave quarters—the forgotten second story of a lean-to on the eastern side of the home, accessible through a trap door in the ceiling—provides a myriad of clues to a long-ago way of life.

Worn stair treads leading upward to a boarded-up doorway which gave access to the main portion of the 1720s house were clearly heavily used, noted Ricciardi, “So much so that the nails are coming through.” These were probably the steps, he said, used by the people living in the rooms when entering the main building to serve the Lott family.

A blackened mortar-covered area on the chimney provides evidence of efforts to warm the space. It was likely, said Ricciardi, a beehive-shaped oven that was later filled in. Dried-up, blackened bits of wax from candles used for illumination spatter the floor.

Most exciting, however, is a cache of objects that appear to have ritualistic meaning, found when the floorboards were lifted. These include corncobs arranged in the shape of a cross or star, a pouch tied with a piece of hemp, a single shell, and a pelvis bone from a sheep or goat.

“In the Caribbean and the south,” explained Ricciardi, “it was common to put such things under the floor where you were living.”

In both the old slave quarters and the hidden room, history is palpable, so close that it can be touched. The past becomes startlingly vivid in these evocative spaces.

“That’s what we have tried to do,” noted Ricciardi. “Make the project alive for people. The amazing thing is that this house is in our own backyard. People still walk by and say, ‘It’s that old house.’ They don’t realize that it’s no ‘that old house,’ but that it is a national treasure.”

The archaeologists’ discoveries at the Lott House are hardly recent. Rather, explained Ricciardi, they date as far back as 1999. “We sat on it for a year and a half,” he went on. “We did as much homework and background research as we could, and we brought in other archaeologists, historians, and cultural anthropologists. We asked them if our line of thinking was possible, because someone else could come in and interpret all of this differently. But, everyone said ‘yes.’”

Has the Lott House finished giving up its secrets? Ricciardi, shining a light on the old slave quarters to illuminate its shadowed corners, said he believed quite the opposite.

“I think the house has a lot more secrets all over the place,” he noted. “We didn’t know this was here. You can’t see it from the outside and it makes no sense that it’s here. We had been working on the house for two and a half years before we found it. That’s what makes this such a special house, why it is so vital that the project moves forward. There’s a lot more history here than any of us imagine.”

Michelle Fiumefreddo

**Day 16: Looking at the Songs of Slavery: What do they mean?**

**Enduring Understandings:**

Under oppression, people find ways to resist the oppression both individually and

collectively.

**Essential Questions:**

What are ways that enslaved people resisted oppression?

**Scope and Sequence Standards:**

4.3- Social, economic, and political conditions of diverse New York communities

(Africans) before the war.

**ELA Common Core Standards:**

W 4.3: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and

events precisely.

**Arts Standards:**

Standard 4: Students will develop an understanding of personal and

cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in

turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

**Objectives:**

-Students will listen to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” and “Caanan”.

- Students will discuss how they feel as they listen to these songs.

- Students will recognize songs are a method of individual coping with oppression.

- Students will analyze the lyrics of Follow the Drinking Gourd.

-Students will write their own songs.

**Materials:**

-Lyric sheets

- Chart Paper

- Writer’s Notebooks

-Computer or Smart Board with Speakers

**Procedure:**

-Have students on the rug or in a close space and remind them of the previous day’s lesson on Plymouth Church. Remind the students that Plymouth Church was another example of collective resistance to slavery.

-Tell the students that today we will be focusing on something that was used as a group means to resist slavery, but also individually.

- Ask the students “What does music mean to you?” “Is it something important?”

- Ask them if they think songs can be used for certain purposes (ie, use examples of song in a commercial, a song that makes you feel happy, a song that makes you feel sad)

- Explain that one of the ways that enslaved persons used to resist slavery was through the use of song.

-Distribute lyric sheets and have the students listen to Caanan (on youtube or any available link).

- Ask them, how did that song make you feel? Why would someone sing this song? Record student answers.

- Explain to the students that these songs helped the enslaved persons keep working, and believing that things will get better. These songs offered hope for them, and in that sense they were fighting their oppression.

- Say to the students that the next song is directions, see if you can find them. have the students listen to “Follow the Drinking Gourd.

- Ask the students if they noticed anything interesting about the song? Did it make sense? Do you think it would be easy to remember?

- Tell the students that this song was actually used to help enslaved persons escape North. The Drinking Gourd was actually the Big Dipper, which was right above the North Star. If the enslaved people followed the North Star, they would be heading North towards their freedom.

-Explain to the students that Peg Leg Joe was a former sailor who lost part of his leg. During the summers he would travel to plantations in the South teaching slaves this song in order to bring them to their freedom.

- Ask the students if they think this is individual or collective resistance to slavery.

-Have the students work on creating their own brief “mystery song”. The students can think about how to disguise the directions to their homes so their songs are mysterious just like Follow the Drinking Gourd. (Provide an example)

-Conclude with a share.

**Differentiation:**

For struggling writers, these students can orally sing their invented song, which the teacher can scribe. For ELL students, new vocabulary can be provided in pictures. These students will also be able to substitute words they are unfamiliar with in their native language, to be reviewed with the teacher later, if she cannot provide immediate translation and the dictionary is inaccessible.

**Assessment:**

Student responses will serve as assessment, as well as their song-writing, performing, or singing. The teacher will also be circulating the room during the writing of the songs to check on student progress.

**Next Steps:**

The students have now been exposed to many ways to resist oppression, both individually and collectively. The following day they will explore Theater of the Oppressed as a means to act out and look for answers for various oppressions.

**Part V:**

**Differentiating Instruction**

This unit contains multiple learning experiences on the subject to appeal to learners of all kinds. During each lesson many strategies are utilized to ensure that all students are able to access the content and focus of the unit. Throughout the unit, both visual and audio aids will be provided for most lessons in order to engage all students. Hard copies of articles will be given to all students as well as being enlarged on the Smart Board for students who may have visual problems and problems with print. Adapted versions of the books read during read alouds will be provided to students who may need them. Adaptations will be done using the program Boardmaker, and may include adaptations in language, explanations of difficult vocabulary words and expressions, as well as picture representations of the passage in order to aid comprehension. Lessons will be kept engaging with movement breaks if needed so all students stay focused on the discussions. Those who find it difficult to focus on the rug may sit on chairs surrounding the rug. The length of writing assignments will vary from student to student depending upon the needs of that particular student. They will have the option to write as much as they are able to; those who cannot write more can write as little as a paragraph. Others are encouraged to write at least a page. For any math lessons, work will be differentiated according to understanding of the skill level needed.

It is important to us to appeal to all kinds of learners in our classroom, which is why many of our activities in the unit are suitable for visual, audio and haptic learners. Certain activities will have students working independently, while others have the option of working in pairs or groups. Our goal is to ensure that we meet the students where they are and help them grow as learners.

**Part VI**

**Assessment**

This unit uses various models of assessment based on the activity the students are performing. Students will be evaluated through various forms of writing, speaking, performance, art works, and class participation. Students will set goals at the start of the unit, explaining what it is they would like to know and master through the KWL chart. As the unit progresses they will go back and monitor their progress, set new goals or re-think old ones as a form of self-reflection and self-assessment.

As we learn new facts, terminology or phrases, students will add them to the “graffiti wall” in the back of our classroom in order to promote careful listening and an awareness of the new vocabulary they are learning. They can also use this wall to brainstorm, communicate new ideas and write mini-facts that they learned about topics covered in the unit. We often make use of KWL charts, which we will go back to in order to fill out the “learned” portions at the end of our unit. Students will have various assignments due throughout the unit, which we will collect and evaluate, such as writing journals, partnership work, and in-class speaking. Conferences will also be held with students so as to gauge their progress on certain assignments and to monitor their progress with their goals. Part of our assessment will also be observing students as they work in order to determine if they are having difficulty with the material. At the end of the unit, students will fill out self-evaluations in order to reflect on their progress and their mastery of the material they have learned. Through all of the varying assessments, the students will be able to self-reflect as well as have multiple opportunities to show-case their learning.

**Part VII**

**Community Resources**

For this project, we will rely heavily on community resources such as field trips as they are an invaluable experience for the students and key in creating a lasting, personal connection to the material for the students. One field trip planned is to the Lott House – a farmhouse in Marine Park that, at its peak, had more than 200 acres – and lots of enslaved persons. Other possible field trips are to the Lefferts House, another farmhouse in Brooklyn that housed enslaved, and Plymouth Church, a still active church that once held slave auctions and possibly was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

These trips are vital to the success of our unit because they give the students a real connection to the subject matter. While we can talk about slaves being *right here* on our own soil, it doesn’t have as much impact until we see it with our own eyes. Our unit incorporates photographs and other primary sources, but nothing can be as personal as actually visiting a site and picturing it in years past, and comparing it with today. The trips allow the students to see sites that are close by, and to imagine who lived there in the past. They can see artifacts from the time and imagine people using them, which provides a much deeper understanding than simply talking or seeing photographs/drawings.

**Contact information:**

Plymouth Church: 75 Hicks Street, Brooklyn NY; (718) 624 – 4743

Lott House: 1940 E 36th Street, Brooklyn NY; [hilhpa@lotthouse.org](mailto:hilhpa@lotthouse.org)

Lefferts House Museum: Prospect Park Brooklyn, near Children’s Corner and the carousel. (718) 789 – 2822

**Part VIII**

**Parental Involvement**

Our classroom has an open door policy, which means that parents are always allowed into our room to see what is going on. Since our unit has a few field trips, parents are important here for supervision on field trips, as well as helping facilitate discussion of artifacts/sights seen on the field trips and over viewing successful completion of trip sheets, etc…

While we make no assumptions about our students’ pasts, it is always possible that a parent or family has some connection to the unit of study when it is taking place right in our backyards. It is possible that a family member of one of our students lived in the area and remembers something of the past (photographs, places, etc…) which could be an invaluable resource for our students. When we study Show Way, it is also possible that a family member has completed something similar – perhaps not even a quilt as a map but a quilt as a symbol of something. Family members and parents bring to the classroom a certain sense of community and may be able to help us create our very own classroom “show way”. They can also be taught ways to integrate this content at home, for example, encouraging your child to reflect about class trips with you at home, and engaging in discusses about the topics covered in class which can be sent home as notices translated into needed languages.

Our class also will do Theater of the Oppressed in which parents will be helpful in getting the class organized and keeping students in character. Theater of the Oppressed is no small task in an elementary classroom, so it will be necessary to have more than one adult present for these two days.

**Part IX**

**Five Components of Social Justice Education**

**Content Mastery**

In this unit the students will begin to notice forms of oppression within their lives through the context of slavery. Slavery is a major form of oppression both physically and emotionally. This unit creates the background knowledge necessary to understand the reasoning behind slavery in the North as well as noticing and experiencing how this oppression was fought both individually and collectively.

**Critical Thinking and Analysis of Oppression**

The students, through exposure to literature, music, place, and images, along with various other outside sources, will question what it means to be oppressed, especially as an enslaved person. They will notice forms of oppression in their own lives through discussion and examination of events both past and present.

**Action and Social Change**

Through theater of the oppressed, the students will problem-solve in order to solve multiple instances of oppression; this could be in both the context of slavery as well as oppression we may experience in our daily life. In a deep analysis of slavery, specifically that seen in Brooklyn, the students will be able to experience and see different ways in which oppression was fought. They will begin to make connections between these oppressions seen within slavery and the oppressions we might see today. They will be exposed to the various strategies used to combat oppression and implement them into their daily lives, as seen through theater of the oppressed.

**Personal Reflection**

The students will be constantly reflecting on what it means to be oppressed and how this oppression is seen in their lives. By using slavery as a lens to view oppression, the students will be able to note how those that were enslaved fought their oppression both individually and as a group. These methods of opposing oppression can be seen today, and used for various means. This process will be recognized through deep personal reflection on the subject.

**Awareness of Multi-Cultural Group Dynamics**

The unit of study is specific to slavery in Brooklyn. This oppression occurred across the borough in various ways. The regions in which the slavery took place determined the treatment of the enslaved persons, and the purpose of the enslaved people, even access to potential freedom. The regions determined the culture in which the enslaved people were exposed. In comparison with Southern slaves, addressed early on in the unit, shows the various cultural perspectives on treatment of the enslaved persons, education of the enslaved persons, along with various other cultural perspectives on slavery in the area.

Through, the classroom quilt along with the various other interactions within the context of the unit, the students will be exposed to varying viewpoints and perspectives. Students will have opportunities to conduct outside research in order to form more opinions on the culture of slavery and oppression. Since the students will be exposed to varying views that might be different from their own, they should gain exposure to the varying other perspectives that exist on oppression and what it means to be oppressed.

**Part X**

**Materials and Resources**

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Slavery In Brooklyn:

Oppression and Resistance

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