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# Reality of Slavery in America vs Elsewhere

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Video Length: 5:02 minutes

## **Lesson Description:**

Did America invent slavery? Was slavery in America different or worse than slavery elsewhere in the world? Were only blacks and people of color slaves? Does slavery exist in the world today? This video challenges the belief that slavery in America was unique, comparing it with global practices and revealing often overlooked aspects of history. Discover why focusing only on the negative in America's past can distort our understanding and impede progress.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- identify the different global practices of slavery throughout history presented in the video.
- compare the treatment and conditions of American slaves with those of slaves in other parts of the world.
- analyze how the focus on America's negative past in slavery narratives can impact societal perspectives and progress.
- evaluate the importance of balanced historical interpretation in understanding and teaching about slavery.

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

**Chattel:** Property that is owned by someone, often used to refer to slaves who were considered the personal property of their owners

**Generational slavery:** A form of slavery where the children of slaves are automatically born into slavery and remain slaves for their entire lives

**Incrementalism:** Making changes in small, gradual steps rather than large, radical shifts

**Narrative:** A spoken or written account of connected events; a story or interpretation of historical events

## **Preview Activity:**

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these preview questions: What do you know about the history of slavery in the United States? What do you know about the history of slavery throughout the world? How do you think American slavery compares with slavery in other parts of the world?

**OR**

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

## **Viewing Guide:**

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

## **Answers to Viewing Guide**

1. common
2. acknowledging
3. clearing
4. welfare
5. blonde
6. Brits
7. unique

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# Slavery in America

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. Generational slavery, like if you're the son of a slave, you're a slave, was extraordinarily \_\_\_\_\_.
2. And sometimes, there's nothing wrong with \_\_\_\_\_ your historical mistakes.
3. Slavery was harsh, but it was a lot less harsh than \_\_\_\_\_ the Brazilian jungle.
4. Reilly says most of the problems began when \_\_\_\_\_ began.
5. The Muslims, many of whom were dark-skinned or even black, took so many \_\_\_\_\_ slaves out of this region that they gave the world "Slav," slave....
6. Because the \_\_\_\_\_ objected for moral reasons.
7. The idea of generational slavery, the idea of slave trading, none of that was \_\_\_\_\_ to America.

**Take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer this question**

Why is it important to know that slavery existed long before the United States?

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## **Discussion and Analysis**

1. Did slavery exist in the world before the United States, before 1619? Explain.
2. How many slaves from Africa were brought to the United States compared to other parts of the New World?
3. How was American slavery similar to and different from slavery in other parts of the world?
4. Why is it important to acknowledge that slavery existed long before the United States of America and that many races were enslaved throughout history? Why is it equally important to acknowledge that slavery was/is in direct contradiction of the founding principles ("...all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, *liberty*..." – Declaration of Independence) of the United States?
5. What are some reasons given for why American slavery is often seen as uniquely brutal?
6. How does the video describe the treatment of slaves in other cultures?
7. Why does the video argue that focusing only on America's negative history can be problematic?
8. Who benefits from focusing only on America's negative history? How do they benefit? Who benefits from dividing the American people along a variety of lines, including racial lines? Who "loses" from having a divided country?
9. What impact did welfare programs have on the black community, according to the video? Why do you think that happened?
10. Why is it important to learn about slavery in different cultures and times?
11. How does the video challenge the narrative presented by the 1619 Project?
12. What role did the British Navy play in abolishing the slave trade?
13. Why does the video suggest that a balanced historical perspective is crucial?
14. How does generational slavery differ from other forms of slavery?
15. Who benefits from portraying slavery as a uniquely horribly American institution? How do they benefit? Who is hurt by this perspective? How?
16. In what ways does the video propose that historical interpretation affects modern society?
17. Why does the video emphasize the importance of incremental change over radical change?
18. How can understanding the global history of slavery help us address current social issues?

### **Discuss These Lines from the Video:**

Today Americans are taught that when it comes to slavery, America was the worst.

...few are taught that most slaves were not shipped to the United States.

The extreme focus on slavery in the United States, why did that happen? One reason is that a lot of black people survived here.

The harm is pointing out how abusive white people were is not going to get black Americans any more capital.

...almost every society had slavery...the Aztecs, the Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Vikings, and most of all, the Islamic world.

...the Muslims, many of whom were dark-skinned or even black, took so many blonde slaves out of this region that they gave the world "Slav," slave, to the global slave population.

The Arabs targeting Africa took out about 17 million people.

The Global Slavery Index estimates that even now, although slavery is illegal, there are more than 700,000 slaves in Saudi Arabia.

American slavery was horrible. But it wasn't unique. Our culture would be healthier if we learned about that.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

I didn't know I was a slave until I found out I couldn't do the things I wanted.  
– Frederick Douglass

As I would not be a *slave*, so I would not be a *master*. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.  
– Abraham Lincoln

Negro slavery is an evil of Colossal magnitude and I am utterly averse to the admission of slavery into the Missouri Territories. It being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted, by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law.  
– John Adams

Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men, but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature.  
– Benjamin Franklin

Americans are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom... The subjection of individuals will increase among democratic nations, not only in the same proportion as their equality, but in the same proportions as their ignorance.  
– Alexis de Tocqueville

I freed a thousand slaves; I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves.  
– Harriet Tubman

Enslave the liberty of but one human being and the liberties of the world are put in peril.  
– William Lloyd Garrison

The assumption that spending more of the taxpayer's money will make things better has survived all kinds of evidence that it has made things worse. The black family - which survived slavery, discrimination, poverty, wars and depressions - began to come apart as the federal government moved in with its well-financed programs to "help."  
– Thomas Sowell

Have we reached the ultimate stage of absurdity where some people are held responsible for things that happened before they were born, while other people are not held responsible for what they themselves are doing today?  
– Thomas Sowell

It surprises people that there's actually a very large number of slaves in the world today — our best estimate is 27 million. And that is defining a slave in a very narrow way; we're not talking about sweatshop workers or people who are just poor, we're talking about people who are controlled by violence, who cannot walk away, who are being held against their will, who are being paid nothing.  
– Kevin Bales

### **Activities:**

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework. (Recall that the K and W sections are to be completed before watching the video and the L section after watching the video.)
2. Have students complete the political cartoon activity in class or for homework.
3. Have students complete the Cloze Activity in class or for homework.
4. Have students complete and submit the Exit Ticket as they leave class.
5. In groups, students will create survey questions regarding the general understanding about slavery's history beyond the United States. Have them poll other students, etc. and create graphs to showcase the results.
6. Students can use the survey questions they created in #5 (or have them create the questions for this activity) and conduct "man on the street" interviews, creating a video that showcases some of the responses.
7. Students will individually select one controversial quote from the video and write a short analysis of its meaning and implications.
8. Organize a Socratic seminar discussing the question: "How does focusing on the negative aspects of history impact society today?"

9. If you didn't use the Cloze activity, have students read the article "I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. The *Times* Ignored Me." Discuss as a class. Was the fact-checker correct to predict that making this mistake would lead to people discounting the project? How does that make them view the rest of the project? Other projects by The Times? What is the importance of fact-checking?

<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/06/1619-project-new-york-times-mistake-122248>

10. Students will read the article "10 Black Slaveowners that Will Tear Apart Historical Perception." What most surprised them about these individuals?

<https://historycollection.com/10-black-slaveowners-that-will-tear-apart-historical-perception/>

11. In groups, have students select one individual from the article "10 Black Slaveowners that Will Tear Apart Historical Perception" and do further research about the individual. What else can they discover about that person's life? Have them create a short biographical presentation (slideshow, video, poster, written) of their selected person.

<https://historycollection.com/10-black-slaveowners-that-will-tear-apart-historical-perception/>

12. As a class, watch the video "Facts about slavery never mentioned in school" from Thomas SowellTV. Have students, in small groups, craft a response to the video, either as a response video of their own (there are many examples of people responding to this video on YT) or as a written response.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyPWjjWs7-w> (8:15)

13. Other videos that may enhance this topical exploration:

- a. Q60: What group of people was taken to American and sold as slaves?

<https://youtu.be/DQ5h7bbJEH0?si=5Y4GBvFcmdB5KWAG> (2:34)

- b. CNN: Ken Bales 'Slavery known, but not understood' (discusses modern slavery)

[https://youtu.be/hgbBtcaeNqs?si=ey776Ozz8\\_jbSbME](https://youtu.be/hgbBtcaeNqs?si=ey776Ozz8_jbSbME) (1:36)

- c. The Surprising Truth Behind Why Arabs Still Practiced Slavery – Thomas SowellTV (8:46) (excerpt from Sowell's book)

<https://youtu.be/VO1VWfPgvAI>

14. Have students individually select one of the Quotes for Discussion from this guide and write an analysis and response to it.

15. Individually, have students craft an essay in response to the prompt "Why It's Important to Take a Balanced View of History." They should include examples of things they learned (maybe already knew) from this video.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Slavery in America**

### **Cloze Activity**

**Directions:** Read the entire passage first. Then fill in the blanks with words from the box.

disputed	verify	congregate	impact
inaccuracies	references	antebellum	institution
significant	celebratory	center	incorrect
vigorously	refused	amend	curriculum

On August 19 of last year I listened in stunned silence as Nikole Hannah-Jones, a reporter for the *New York Times*, repeated an idea that I had \_\_\_\_\_ argued against with her fact-checker: that the patriots fought the American Revolution in large part to preserve slavery in North America.

Hannah-Jones and I were on Georgia Public Radio to discuss the path-breaking *New York Times* 1619 Project, a major feature about the \_\_\_\_\_ of slavery on American history, which she had spearheaded. The *Times* had just published the special 1619 edition of its magazine, which took its name from the year 20 Africans arrived in the colony of Virginia—a group believed to be the first enslaved Africans to arrive in British North America.

Weeks before, I had received an email from a *New York Times* research editor. Because I'm an historian of African American life and slavery, in New York, specifically, and the pre-Civil War era more generally, she wanted me to \_\_\_\_\_ some statements for the project. At one point, she sent me this assertion: "One critical reason that the colonists declared their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the \_\_\_\_\_ of slavery in the colonies, which had produced tremendous wealth. At the time there were growing calls to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire, which would have badly damaged the economies of colonies in both North and South."

I vigorously \_\_\_\_\_ the claim. Although slavery was certainly an issue in the American Revolution, the protection of slavery was not one of the main reasons the 13 Colonies went to war.

The editor followed up with several questions probing the nature of slavery in the Colonial era, such as whether enslaved people were allowed to read, could legally marry, could



\_\_\_\_\_ in groups of more than four, and could own, will or inherit property—the answers to which vary widely depending on the era and the colony. I explained these histories as best I could—with \_\_\_\_\_ to specific examples—but never heard back from her about how the information would be used.

Despite my advice, the *Times* published the \_\_\_\_\_ statement about the American Revolution anyway, in Hannah-Jones' introductory essay. In addition, the paper's characterizations of slavery in early America reflected laws and practices more common in the \_\_\_\_\_ era than in Colonial times, and did not accurately illustrate the varied experiences of the first generation of enslaved people that arrived in Virginia in 1619.

Both sets of \_\_\_\_\_ worried me, but the Revolutionary War statement made me especially anxious. Overall, the 1619 Project is a much-needed corrective to the blindly \_\_\_\_\_ histories that once dominated our understanding of the past—histories that wrongly suggested racism and slavery were not a central part of U.S. history. I was concerned that critics would use the overstated claim to discredit the entire undertaking. So far, that's exactly what has happened.

The 1619 Project became one of the most talked-about journalistic achievements of the year—as it was intended to. The *Times* produced not just a magazine, but podcasts, a newspaper section, and even a \_\_\_\_\_ designed to inject a new version of American history into schools. Now it's back in circulation; the *Times* is promoting it again during journalistic awards season, and it's already a finalist for the National Magazine Awards and rumored to be a strong Pulitzer contender.

But it has also become a lightning rod for critics, and that one sentence about the role of slavery in the founding of the United States has ended up at the \_\_\_\_\_ of a debate over the whole project. A letter signed by five academic historians claimed that the 1619 Project got some \_\_\_\_\_ elements of the history wrong, including the claim that the Revolutionary War was fought to preserve slavery. They have demanded that the *New York Times* issue corrections on these points, which the paper has so far \_\_\_\_\_ to do. For her part, Hannah-Jones has acknowledged that she overstated her argument about slavery and the Revolution in her essay, and that she plans to \_\_\_\_\_ this argument for the book version of the project, under contract with Random House.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Slavery in America

### Cloze Activity - ANSWER KEY

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Reality of Slavery in America vs Elsewhere K-W-L Chart

**Directions:** Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the question below the K-W-L chart.

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
What I know about the history of slavery in the U.S. and world...	What I want to know about the history of slavery in the U.S. and world...	What I've learned about the history of slavery in the U.S. and world...

"American slavery was horrible. But it wasn't unique. Our culture would be healthier if we learned about that." Do you agree or disagree with that statement from the video? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain your reasoning.

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**Name**

Admit One

Why is it important to know that slavery existed globally, long before 1619, and was not solely along racial lines?

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**

**Name**

Admit One

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

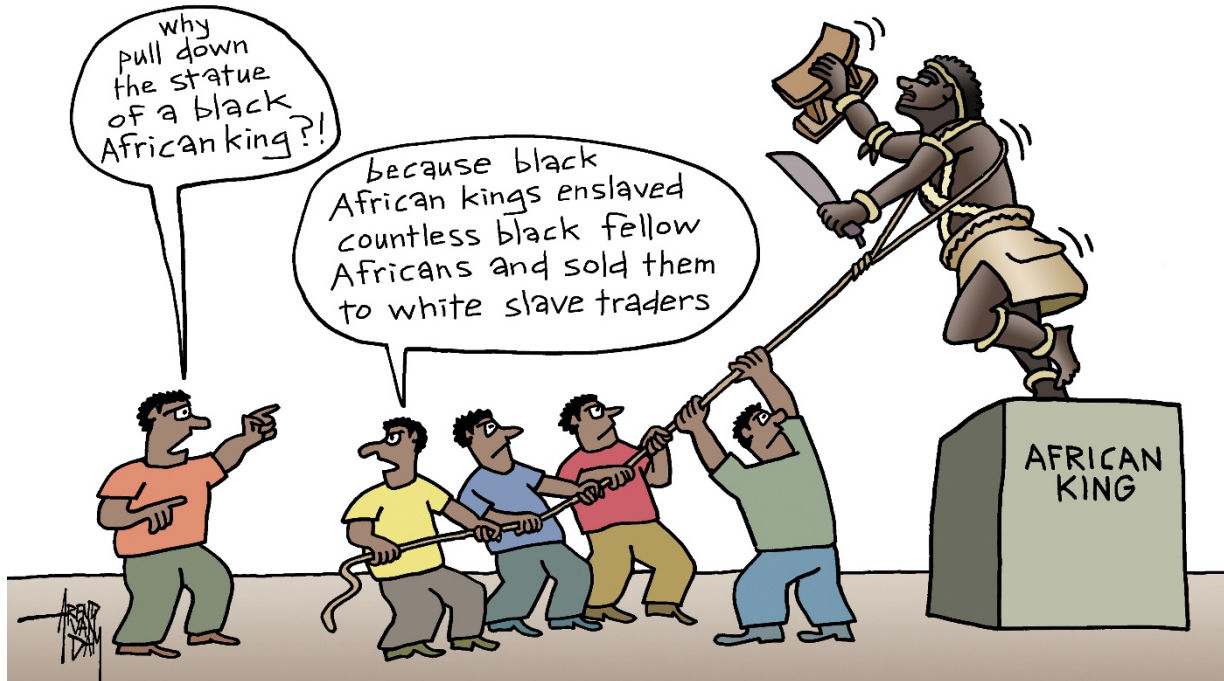
Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Reality of Slavery in America vs Elsewhere

### Political Cartoon Activity

**Directions:** Use the political cartoon to answer the questions.



How does this cartoon challenge the commonly taught narrative of slavery in America and how does that connect with the arguments presented in the video?

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What message is the cartoonist trying to convey about the role of African leaders in the transatlantic slave trade and how does this complicate the understanding of slavery's history?

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How does the cartoon illustrate the idea that slavery was not unique to America, as discussed in the video?

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