



## Lesson 9.2 “DBQ on Black Americans Before the Civil War”

### Unit 9: Reforming New Hampshire

#### Lesson Objectives

- Students will participate in discussion on lesson vocabulary.
- Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to assess the lives of Black Americans in the time before the Civil War.
- Students will write an informational paragraph answering the Document Based Question (DBQ) using evidence from the provided primary and secondary sources.

#### Lesson Competencies

- I can initiate and sustain a focused discussion. (ELA 7)
- I can analyze primary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can develop my ideas using sources to gather concrete details, facts, quotes, and other information related to my focus. (ELA 5)

#### Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

#### Focus Questions

How did the institution of slavery affect Black people living in New Hampshire?  
What types of experiences did Black people in New Hampshire have before the Civil War?

#### Estimated Time

Two to three 40-minute class sessions

#### Materials & Equipment

Group set of “Document Based Question on Black Americans before the Civil War” for Question A group  
Group set of “Document Based Question on Black Americans before the Civil War” for Question B group  
Group set of “Document Based Question on Black Americans before the Civil War” for Question C group  
Group set of “Document Based Question on Black Americans before the Civil War” for Question D group  
Class set of “Informative Paragraph HINT Sheet” graphic organizer  
White board or chart paper to collect student responses



## Educator Introduction & Rationale

Black people living in the United States in the years before the Civil War faced a number of challenges and uncertainties. Until 1865, slavery was a legal institution in parts of America, mainly in the southern states but also in the North, even though it was being gradually phased out. The last enslaved person in New Hampshire died in 1840, effectively ending the practice in the Granite State, but the state did not officially outlaw it until 1857.

There were also many free Black people living in the United States during this period. Most were concentrated in the North, but there were free Black people in the South as well. They were not acknowledged as citizens, though, and their lives were marked by discrimination and inequality. In addition, some Black people held an even more uncertain place in American society because they had escaped from slavery (which is today referred to as self-emancipating or freedom-seeking rather than the more antiquated term “runaway”). They were no longer enslaved, but they were not technically free either. They lived under the constant threat of recapture and a return to slavery.

By 1860, there were 4 million enslaved people living in the United States and another 500,000 free Black people. Unsurprisingly, Black Americans were not a monolithic group, although they certainly shared some important commonalities of culture and experiences. Depending on where they lived and their legal status, though, their lives had differing characteristics and opportunities. Members of Black communities often worked together to help each other, and many individual Black entrepreneurs and tradesmen found success, respect, and acclaim. Nevertheless, slavery cast a shadow over all Black people living anywhere in the United States, enslaved or free.

This lesson is the second lesson in Unit 9: Reforming New Hampshire and can stand alone from the unit. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the lived experiences of Black Americans during this time period. First, they activate knowledge about evidence in informative writing. Students then work in groups to complete one of four Document Based Questions (DBQs) about the lives of Black Americans before the Civil War. These experiences are reflected in photographs, paintings, historical artifacts, and documents, including first-hand accounts. Students finally share their work, allowing the class a greater understanding of the diversity of the Black experience in the United States before the Civil War. The four DBQ groups are:

- Group A: Enslaved Black people in the South,
- Group B: Enslaved Black people in New England,
- Group C: Free Black people in New Hampshire, and
- Group D: Enslaved Black people seeking freedom.

In a DBQ, students are presented with a question to evaluate with the help of primary and/or secondary sources. Each document has questions to help students interpret and use the source and ultimately answer the main question. In general, DBQs can be done alone or in groups. DBQs are important for students to practice throughout their social studies education as they will use them at all levels of their academic careers; hence, they need to become familiar with them. Additionally, DBQs target essential standards having to do with using evidence from primary and secondary sources and supporting a thesis in writing. In this particular DBQ, students will create an informative piece designed to share with their classmates. Students create an informative paragraph instead of an argumentative document due to the sensitive nature of the material and of the lived experience of the individuals whose voices and histories are featured.



This lesson has been aligned to standards for grades 3–5, however, the topics and skills will be meaningful for middle school students as well. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

**Teaching tip:** Note with students that it is important when speaking of people who have been enslaved to use the words “enslaved people” rather than the dehumanizing “slave.” Additionally, prepare your students that some of the language they will encounter in the primary sources will be not just old-fashioned but troubling. Remind them to use the appropriate language that is common today rather than the 19th-century language, which may be viewed as offensive now. The second activation addresses these terms and is designed to help students recognize the necessity of changing language to reflect lived experiences.

**Teaching tip:** Avoid asking questions or directing conversations toward the idea of students talking about what they would have done or how they would have felt in the position of the individuals presented in these documents as grade school education does not prepare students to understand the profound experiences of Black Americans during this time. Instead, focus on creating historical empathy through the experiences presented in the documents and ensure that students understand the attitudes reflected in these sources were held by people in the past, not today. In addition, although these activities require students to generalize about people’s views and experiences, be sure to remind students that this lesson does not present the true variety of beliefs and experiences among groups of people. Try to help students qualify general statements by using expressions like “many people,” “some people,” or “most people” to allow for the diversity of opinion among the groups of people under discussion in this lesson.



## Learning Activity

### Activation

**Discuss, define, model.** Write the word **informative** on the board and ask for definitions. Encourage several responses so students hear the word defined in different ways. Record definitions and discuss together. In what situations do we give knowledge about something? How is that different from persuading?

Definition of **informative**:

- Giving useful or interesting knowledge

Pick a portion of the school day with routines very familiar to your class but that might not be easily understandable to an outside observer (circle time, recess, a special, etc.). Tell the students that you are going to brainstorm how to write an informative paragraph about this time in your day.

1. Collect evidence from the class and record on the board. What happens during this time? What rules or procedures are followed?
2. Review the evidence together and mark what might need more explanation, what pieces of evidence should be linked together, and in what order the evidence belongs.
3. Together, construct a topic sentence introducing the informative paragraph. Use familiar writing practices in your class for topic sentences, but be sure it includes a broad introduction to the topic without details.
4. Using the evidence on the board, write a brief informative passage about this time in your day, using facts and details. This can be done as a class, individually, or in pairs. Remind students to include a summary sentence at the end.
5. Preserve this informative paragraph as an example for students to use throughout the lesson. Consider labeling the topic sentence, facts and details, and summary sentence so that students recall the pieces of the writing.

If students need help with primary versus secondary sources, please see the lesson "Understanding Primary and Secondary Sources" at the bottom of the Unit Plan page on the "Moose on the Loose" Educators' section.

### Guided Practice

**DBQ on Black Americans before the Civil War.** Tell students that they will now gather evidence about the lives of Black Americans in America in the years before the Civil War so that they will be able to write an informative paragraph. Define together the four different groups of Black experience that will be covered by this activity:

- Group A: Enslaved Black person on a plantation in the South
- Group B: Enslaved Black person in New England
- Group C: Free Black person living in New Hampshire
- Group D: Enslaved Black person trying to escape from slavery



After examining the sources in their group, students will answer the questions and then use their knowledge to write an informative paragraph.

Divide your class into four groups, although note that initial work with the documents will be done individually. Distribute the "Document Based Question on Black Americans Before the Civil War" worksheets, noting which students should get the Questions A, B, C and D worksheets. Students should work alone, although if your class is not used to working with DBQs, it might be easier for students to work in pairs. They should answer the questions after each of the four sources. Check for understanding while circulating and let students reference the answer keys as appropriate.

### Independent Practice & Formative Assessment

**Construct informative paragraph.** As students finish with the DBQ, have groups A, B, C, and D gather together to discuss their ideas for writing an informative paragraph. Distribute "Informative Paragraph HINT Sheet" and have students use it to draft their paragraphs. Provide the example informative paragraph written about a class routine for an outsider in Activation as an example.

Decide for your class whether students will write their informative paragraphs alone, in pairs, or in groups. They can write in class or out of class; make the due date clear. Check in regularly and ask how they are making use of the documents and the evidence. When students have finished with the rough drafts, use best practices in your class to have them prepare final drafts.

### Reflection

**Presentations.** Since each group will only have worked with one set of documents and experience of Black Americans, groups will need to share their findings with the rest of the class to learn about the range of experiences for Black Americans during this time period.

Set aside class time for each group of students to present what they learned, focusing on the third question asked on the worksheets. Help track the information students learned by creating four visual squares students can see in the classroom. The squares could either be four large pieces of paper taped to the wall, a classroom board divided into four squares, or a projected image of four squares. Each square should be labeled with a different category of Black experience.

After each group has presented its findings, discuss with the class what life might have been like for those living in each category. Highlight any similarities between groups' experiences and any differences.



**Reinforcement** For students who need more scaffolding, consider selecting two sources per topic so they can focus on what to learn from each source. Alternatively, students could focus just on secondary sources in order to organize information into a paragraph.

**Extension** If students are ready to consider more than one topic's set of sources to further their understanding of the Black experience in American history, provide them with additional groups' sources and questions. They can then write additional paragraphs or combine their information into one informative paragraph.

## Supporting Materials

### New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. Mason Explains: Slavery in the United States
2. Benjamin Thompson's Farewell, Object ID: 2002.007
3. Runaway Notice for Cato, *New Hampshire Gazette*, January 11, 1765, Object ID: 98556

### Other Resources

- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, online at Documenting the American South [docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html](https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html)
- Shackles, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift from the Liljenquist Family Collection [nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc\\_2011.51.3?destination=/explore/collection/search%3Fedan\\_q%3Dshackles](https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2011.51.3?destination=/explore/collection/search%3Fedan_q%3Dshackles)
- Slave Quarters in South Carolina, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [www.loc.gov/item/2015646741/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2015646741/)
- Freedom Petition Submitted by Enslaved People to the New Hampshire State Legislature, pages 1 and 3, 1779, New Hampshire State Archives
- *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa: But Resident above Sixty Years in the United States of America*, online at Documenting the American South [docsouth.unc.edu/neh/venture/venture.html](https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/venture/venture.html)
- Flora Stewart Photograph, Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections [digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-cdc0-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-cdc0-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99)
- Biography of William Haskell by Rebecca Courser for the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire 2019 Lenten Program [blackheritagetrailnh.org/2019-lenten-program-day-31/](https://blackheritagetrailnh.org/2019-lenten-program-day-31/)
- Affidavit of Robert Roberts of Boston, from *The Despotism of Freedom, Or, The Tyranny and Cruelty of American Republican Slave-masters* [www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Despotism\\_of\\_Freedom\\_Or\\_The\\_Tyranny/iGdBAQAAMAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Despotism_of_Freedom_Or_The_Tyranny/iGdBAQAAMAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0)
- "Washington's Runaway Slave," *Granite Freeman*, May 22, 1845 [encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/washingtons-runaway-slave-the-liberator-august-22-1845/](https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/washingtons-runaway-slave-the-liberator-august-22-1845/)
- Caution! Poster, Library of Congress [www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.06002200/?st=text](https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.06002200/?st=text)



## Standards

### “Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that the United States became divided over several issues in the decades before the Civil War, including slavery, which resulted in rising tensions throughout the nation. They will understand that New Hampshire played a part in these relationships. (3-5.T4.2)

### “Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1)

### New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ US / NH History: Contacts, Exchanges & International Relations (SS:HI:4:2.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: World Views and Value systems and their Intellectual and Artistic Expressions (SS:HI:4:3.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: Social/Cultural (SS:HI:4:5.1, SS:HI:4:5.4, SS:HI:4:5.5)

### NCSS Thematic Strands:

- ✓ Theme 1: Culture
- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

### C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Perspectives (D2.His.4.3-5, D2.His.5.3-5, D2.His.6.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.9.3-5, D2.His.10.3-5, D2.His.13.3-5)
- ✓ Causation and Argumentation (D2.His.16.3-5, D2.His.17.3-5)
- ✓ Gathering and Evaluating Sources (D3.1.3-5)
- ✓ Communicating Conclusions (D4.2.3-5)

### Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.1)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.4.4)
- ✓ Fluency in Foundational Skills (RF.4.4)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.4.2, W.4.2a, W.4.2b, W.4.2d, W.4.2e)
- ✓ Production and Distribution of Writing (W.4.4)





## Lesson Vocabulary

<b>Civil War</b>	(noun) A war from 1861 to 1865 between the northern and southern parts of the United States. The southern states left the United States to form their own country called the Confederate States of America, but the northern states didn't want to let them go. The war was fought to see if the United States would break into two countries or remain one country.
<b>enslaved</b>	(verb) The act of labeling a human being as property and forcing them to work for nothing
<b>informative</b>	(adjective) Giving useful or interesting knowledge
<b>plantation</b>	(noun) A large estate that focuses on growing crops for money
<b>shackles</b>	(noun) A pair of handcuffs connected by a chain used to hold prisoners' hands or legs together
<b>slavery</b>	(noun) When human beings are treated as property and made to work for nothing

