**Personal Accounts of Slavery**

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**Grade level:** 7th grade

**Subject Area:** Africa, United States Slavery, Human Rights, Global Studies, History, Social Studies

**Estimated Time:** Two Fifty-minute lessons

**Colorado Academic Standards/BVSD Standards:**

7th grade Social Studies Standard 1.1b (History: Analyze historical sources for accuracy and point of view while formulating historical questions. Sources include but are not limited to art, artifacts, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams, and written texts)

7th grade Social Studies Standard 4.1c (Civics: Define the roles of citizens in various governmental systems)

**Learning Objectives:**

Essential Question: Why do people exploit others? What are the long-lasting effects of exploitation?

Learning Target: By reading the personal accounts of enslaved individuals, I will determine what the experience of an enslaved person was like.

**Lesson Description:**

The objective of this lesson is to encourage empathy among students and understand the relevance of the slave trade. First students will hear and respond to the personal account of an individual enslaved during the transatlantic slave trade. We will discuss what this experience was like, look at slave ships, and do a simulation of what it was like for the slaves.

We will wrap up that discussion saying thankfully the transatlantic slave trade has ended and we have moved on from this dark spot in human history. Clearly, we would never let anything like this happen again.

At that point, students will read about modern day slavery and have a discussion with their reactions.The final piece of this lesson relates to social activism. Students will write letters to political representatives who can choose to adopt anti-slavery legislature.

**Activity:**

Warm up:

Now that we have discussed the context of the transatlantic slave trade, we will take a closer look at what the experience of a slave was.

To start, do this simulation of what the experience on the slave ships were. Have students write down their five most prized possessions on 5 separate pieces of paper.

Tape an area on the floor that will be your ship that all students need to squeeze into. Watch this video for examples of how to lead this simulation. Gradually you will take away all the students prized possession cards and tear them up.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4CUAPBicfA>

Activities:

While students are still sitting cramped, read aloud the experience of an enslaved individual. After you read have students return to their seats for discussion.

Discussion Questions:

What was is like on the slave ships?

Why did they ship them across the Atlantic in this way?

What are some of the negative consequences of shipping people in this way?

Can you imagine this occurring in the world today?

Why do people exploit others?

After discussing, tell students that this type of horrific human rights abuse could never occur in the world today right?

Pass out the reading about modern- day slavery in the United States. Discuss the article with the class:

* How does slavery still exist today?
* What is modern-day slavery called?
* Where does it happen?
* Why does this still happen?
* What can we do to stop this from happening?

Tell students that there are several organizations that work on ending modern-day slavery such as the United Nations. A large NGO that works on fighting human trafficking is the Polaris Project. They work on exposing the stories of victims of trafficking and pressuring government officials to pass laws that fight modern day slavery.

Polaris Project’s current targeted bill:

There's a new bill in Congress that would require companies to disclose the measures they're taking to address forced labor and human trafficking within their supply chains. **Let's hold companies accountable. Tell your members of Congress that you want companies to reveal the steps they are taking to stop the trafficking and exploitation of workers.**

<http://hq.salsalabs.com/o/5417/p/dia/action3/common/public/index.sjs?action_KEY=21178>

Now students are to write letters to their local congressman, persuading her/him to support the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act. Students can look at this sample letter and borrow some of the legislative language for their own letters.

**Resources:**

Polaris Project

<https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking>

Write to your Congressman Link

<http://hq.salsalabs.com/o/5417/p/dia/action3/common/public/index.sjs?action_KEY=21178>

**So what?**

Learning about the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and then realizing that slavery still exists in some form serves to foster a sense of empathy among students. Many times students feel empathetic about an issue they learn about, but unless they are taught social activism, empathy can turn into apathy. To encourage students to turn their empathy into action, students will learn how to take action. This also serves as a lesson in civics, showing students that their role as citizens enables them to contact government officials regarding policies that they would like to see actualized.

**Assessment**

Students will be assessed on their understanding of the magnitude of the issue of human trafficking based on their persuasive letters to the congressman or congresswoman.