

# On the Block In Baltimore: From Slavery to Freedom Teacher's Guide

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## Objective:

Students will use reading skills to learn about slavery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Maryland Learning Outcomes:

### Reading/Language Arts:

*Students examine, construct and extend the meaning of a variety of self-selected and assigned text (traditional and electronic) by applying a range of reading strategies and analytic techniques.*

### Comprehension and Interpretation of Informational Text:

- Summarize text in a manner that reflects the main ideas, significant details, and its underlying meaning.
- Reorganize information from the text into a different form (charts, drawings, or graphic organizers.
- Identify additional information needed.

## Materials needed:

Optional - atlas, map of the world

## Worksheet:

On the Block Worksheet (4 pages) for each student

## Web Sites Referenced:

- Map of West Africa: [http://www.worldbook.com/fun/aajourney/html/slide\\_1.html](http://www.worldbook.com/fun/aajourney/html/slide_1.html)
- Slave Ship: <http://www.mnh.si.edu/garden/diversity/slaveship.html>
- Historic map of Maryland, Virginia, and Chesapeake Bay:  
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/1755v5.jpg>
- Tobacco plantation: <http://calvert-county.com/tobacco.htm>
- Blacksmith shop: <http://www.history.org/almanack/life/trades/trblapc1.htm>
- Slave quarters: <http://www.history.org/places/hb/hbslave.htm>
- The Blacksmith in Utah: <http://www.uvol.com/pioneer/smithy.html>
- Internet African American History Challenge:  
<http://www.brightmoments.com/blackhistory/>

## **Teacher Background:**

Maryland was colonized in 1603. In 1618 the British government sanctioned the slave trade. Maryland became involved in the slave trade in 1634. The first US census was taken in 1790. At that time, 19.3% of the population was African American - 59,466 free and 697,897 slaves, with Massachusetts reporting no slaves at all. The US population breakdown was:

- White Population – 80.7%,
- Slaves – 17.8%.
- Free Blacks – 1.5%,

The population of Maryland in 1790 was 319,728 with a slave population of 103,036 – 32% which was well above the national average.

This lesson highlights the life of two African boys, Dembi and Moeyon, who were kidnapped from their home in Africa and brought to Baltimore as slaves. The story follows the life of the boys in two locations; Dembi was taken to work on a tobacco plantation in St. Mary's County; Moeyon became a blacksmith in Annapolis. Both were given their freedom by the end of their lives. This was not the case for most slaves. However a percentage of African Americans did become free. In fact, Baltimore had the largest free black population in the country.

## **Introduction:**

Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a sheet of paper. Set a time, and tell students to list everything they know about slavery in our country. Have each group initial the information they recorded and repeat the process one more time. Discuss the list. Tell the class that they are now going to meet on the Internet two boys their own age who were actually slaves.

## **Lesson Development:**

Have students work through the lesson on the Internet. Be sure they complete the On the Block Worksheet as they work. Some may wish to follow Dembi on the tobacco plantation; other may wish to follow Moeyon in the blacksmith shop in Annapolis.

When all have completed the lesson, discuss the similarities and differences between the lives of slaves in the two different locations – rural and urban. Ask students to compare what they learned in the lesson with what they listed during the introductory activity.

## **Thoughtful Application:**

Question #16 on the On the Block Worksheet serves as the Thoughtful Application for this lesson. It asks students to draw an illustration that might fit the last page of the story of Dembi or Moeyon. It directs students to: 1) Identify the character, 2) draw the picture, 3) give the picture a caption, and 4) write a paragraph explaining how the drawing is related to the story.

**Scoring Tool:**

3 Points	Illustration, caption, and paragraph explaining the drawing are proficiently completed.
2 Points	Illustration, caption, and paragraph explaining the drawing are satisfactorily completed.
1 Point	Illustration, caption, and paragraph explaining the drawing are minimally completed.

**Extensions:**

1. The following is a list of some African Americans from Maryland who became free, like Frederick Douglass, or who were born free after slavery was abolished. Each has an important place in history because of his or her contribution to American life and culture.

A short biography for each of these African Americans can be found at:  
<http://library.thinkquest.org/10854/biogr.html>

Have students research one or more of these figures and give a report to the class about his or her contribution to American life and culture.

- Ira Aldridge – Shakespeare actor
- Benjamin Banneker – astronomer, almanac publisher
- Eubie Blake - musician
- Frederick Douglass – abolitionist, author, politician
- Henry Highland Garnet – Presbyterian minister
- Francis Ellen Watkins Harper – poet
- Josiah Henson – preacher
- Matthew Henson – explorer, first to reach North Pole
- Billie Holiday – blues singer
- Thurgood Marshall – Supreme Court Justice
- James Amos Porter – artist
- William Still – entrepreneur

2. Research the ways in which slaves of Maryland achieved freedom from slavery.

**Additional Web Sites:**

- The arrival of Europeans in Africa: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h306.html>
- Landing at Jamestown: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h289.html>