

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Slave Narratives

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Escott, Paul D.	<i>Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. “Title,” in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Berlin, Ira, et al, eds.	<i>Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867</i> , vol. 1, series 1. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
Berlin, Ira, et al.	<i>Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War</i> . Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Blassingame, John W.	“Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” <i>Journal of Southern History</i> 41, no. 4 (November 1975): 473-92.
_____.	<i>The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South</i> . New York, Oxford University Press, 1979.
Genovese, Eugene D.	<i>Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made</i> . New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Hampton, Ellen	“‘Lawdy! I was sho’ happy when I was a slave!’: Manipulative Editing in the WPA Former-Slave Narratives from Mississippi,” <i>L’Ordinaire des Amériques</i> 215 (2013).
Litwack, Leon F.	<i>Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery</i> . New York: Knopf, 1979.
Musher, Sharon Ann	“Contesting ‘The Way the Almighty Wants It’: Crafting Memories of Ex-Slaves in the Slave Narrative Collection,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 53, no. 1 (March 2001): 1-31.
Rawick, George P., ed.	<i>The American Slave: A Composite Biography</i> , 41 vols. Westport, CT: Greenwood Pub. Co., 1972-1979.
Rawick, George P.	<i>From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community</i> . Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972.
Shaw, Stephanie J.	“Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression,” <i>Journal of Southern History</i> 69, no. 3 (August 2003): 623-58.
Silkenat, David and John Barr	“‘Serving the Lord and Abe Lincoln’s Spirit’: Lincoln and Memory in the WPA Narratives,” <i>Lincoln Herald</i> 115, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 75-97.
Soapes, Thomas F.	“The Federal Writers’ Project Slave Interviews: Useful Data or Misleading Source,” <i>Oral History Review</i> 5 (1977): 33-38.
Spindel, Donna J.	“Assessing Memory: Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives Reconsidered,” <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 247-61.
Starling, Marion Wilson	<i>The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History</i> . Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1988.
Ward, Andrew	<i>The Slaves’ War: The Civil War in the Words of Former Slaves</i> . Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.
Yetman, Norman, ed.	“The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 19, no. 3 (Autumn 1967): 534-53.

_____.	Norman R. Yetman, “Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historography of Slavery,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 36, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 181-210, esp. p. 190.
_____.	<i>When I Was a Slave: Memoirs from the Slave Narrative Collection</i> . Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002.

Organizations

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/	<i>Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938</i> contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume <i>Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves</i> .
http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/index.html	The “Freedmen and Southern Society Project” was established to identify, collect, and publish thousands of documents related to the history of emancipation in the Civil War era. This website includes information about the project and its growing list of published materials.
http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/5/85.05.02.x.html	“Slave Narratives: Black Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century America” provides a lesson plan for using selections from the WPA narratives in the high school

	classroom.
http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/slave-narratives-constructing-us-history-through-analyzing-primary-sources	“Slave Narratives: Constructing U.S. History Through Analyzing Primary Sources” offers another lesson plan – suitable for grade school students – developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities.
https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/slave-narrative-of-william-bill-simms/19955	Kansas Historical Society Slave Narrative of William “Bill” Simms.
http://7008.sydneyplus.com/final/Portal/SouthernUniversity.aspx?component=AABC&record=296fb82a-d012-4396-bd3c-8f18c5e4f8f3	John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A&M College houses a collection of slave narratives from 17 states arranged alphabetically by state and last name of the former slave.
http://7008.sydneyplus.com/final/Portal/SouthernUniversity.aspx?component=AABC&record=2f873168-af50-444d-8039-e2b7450cb6d3	John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A&M College houses a collection of slave narratives from the Louisiana Works Progress Administration in 5 series arranged alphabetically by state and last name of the former slave.
Sarah Gudger's Journey to Freedom (arcgis.com) Swannanoa Valley Museum & History Center – Est. 1989	Sarah Gudger’s Journey to Freedom is an online exhibit exploring the Slave Narrative about Sarah. The exhibit is provided by the Swannanoa Valley Museum and History Center in Black Mountain NC.

Other Sources

Scholars

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Précis

For a century after emancipation, historians of U.S. slavery relied almost exclusively on sources written by white people. These plentiful materials ranged from slaveholders’

diaries to European travelers' accounts, and scholars deployed them all in their fierce debates over slaves' living conditions, productivity, and psychology. They reached radically different conclusions, comparing plantations to everything from schools to concentration camps. But something was missing. Without listening to the words of enslaved people, historians could not study slavery from their point of view. For all their disputes, early scholars focused on what masters did to or for their slaves. They paid scant attention to what slaves thought, felt, and did themselves. By examining slave-produced sources, scholars in the 1970s permanently transformed the study of American slavery. They asked new questions, adopted new research methods, advanced new arguments, and unleashed new debates. Few primary sources did more to stimulate this innovation than the ex-slave interviews conducted by the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency, in the 1930s. Commonly called the "WPA Slave Narratives," this collection of more than 2000 transcripts changed how historians understand antebellum slavery. But they also have much more to teach us about the Civil War and its aftermath.
