

Lesson 8: Enslavement and Emancipation

"Throughout the course of slavery there were always people who ran toward freedom... look in your own neighborhood and find where the spirit of the underground remains." —Shane Evans

Social Justice Standards: Justice 12, 15

Summary

Anti-racist journeys are not easy. They require us to challenge our thinking, and, in many circumstances, challenge the learning that we may have come to know and understand for a long time. When it comes to stories of enslavement and emancipation, the goal is to broaden our lens and knowledge of what we know to be true and listen to the stories that we may have not heard or been told before. As you read these stories, know that they may show truths about history that you were not aware of. Lean into your discomfort and curiosity to gain perspective and history to take with you on your journey and beyond.

Booklist

- *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water* by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson, illustrated by Nikkolos Smith
- *Circle Unbroken* by Margot Thies Raven, illustrated by E. B. Lewis
- *Brick by Brick* by Charles R. Smith Jr., illustrated by Floyd Cooper
- *Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom* by Shane W. Evans
- *Juneteenth for Mazie* by Floyd Cooper

Consider This

- Think about the distinctions between a proclamation of independence and a proclamation of emancipation. Do they create the same kind of freedom?
- Are there new stories that you have learned over the years about slavery and emancipation that paint a different picture than what you learned growing up?
- It has been said that the prison system of the United States is a modern form of slavery when it comes to free labor, living and working conditions, and the disproportionate number of Black and brown people imprisoned. What do you think about this?
- How do you think the history and reality of slavery in this country still affects us today?

Talk Together

- Many of the children in these stories were not able to go to school and had to work instead. What do you think that life must have been like?
- If you lived during that time, what would you have done to help friends who may have lived a life in enslavement?
- Being enslaved meant not having any freedoms to make your own choices in your life. How would you feel if you had to live with no choices or freedom?

Engage

Many stories around slavery and emancipation are centered around the stories of sadness and sorrow. Although these are important and allow us a window into this time, there were many people advocating for change and standing up for the freedom of slaves. Research and learn more about the many people fighting for justice and change during this time. Think about how this adds to the story and progression of this movement.

Explore More

- Netflix's 2016 documentary 13th
- NMAAHC's "The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth"
- Learning for Justice's "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery"