



Learning Activities

#1. African-American life in Savannah before & after the Civil War

A. Choosing a Character

Each pair or trio of students will be given the identity of one African-American leader in the Savannah community. Throughout this unit, the student will research and consider questions from the perspective of this leader.

African-American leaders from Savannah, Georgia.

1. *William J. Campbell*, age 51, born in Savannah, enslaved until 1849, liberated by will of his mistress, Ms. May Maxwell. For ten years, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Savannah, numbering around 1,800 members. The church property belongs to congregation. Trustees are all white. Worth around \$18,000.

2. *John Cox*, age 58, born in Savannah, enslaved until 1849, bought freedom for \$1,100. Pastor of the Second African Baptist Church. In the ministry fifteen years. Congregation of 1,222 persons. Church property worth \$10,000, belongs to the congregation.

3. *Ulysses L. Houston*, age 41, born in Grahamsville, S.C., enslaved until the Union army entered Savannah. Had been owned by Moses Henderson of Savannah. Pastor of Third African Baptist Church. Congregation numbers 400. Church property worth \$5,000, belongs to congregation. In the ministry about eight years.

4. *William Gaines*, age 41, born Wills County, Ga. Enslaved until Union forces freed him. Originally owned by Robert Toombs, formerly U.S. Senator, and his brother, Gabriel Toombs. Gaines is the local preacher of the M.E. Church (Andrew's Chapel). In the ministry sixteen years.



#1. African-American life in Savannah before & after the Civil War (cont'd)

5. *Garrison Frazier*, age 67, born in Granville County, N.C., enslaved until about eight years ago when he bought himself and his wife, paying \$1,000 in gold and silver. Is an ordained minister in the Baptist Church, but, his health is failing, has now charge of no congregation. Has been in the ministry for 35 years.

6. *Arthur Wardell*, age 44, born in Liberty County, Ga. Enslaved until freed by Union army. Owned by A.A. Solomons of Savannah. Wardell is a licensed minister in the Baptist Church. Has been in the ministry for six years.

7. *Jas. Porter*, age 39, born in Charleston, S.C., free born, his mother having purchased her freedom. Is lay reader and president of the board of wardens and vestry of St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Colored Church in Savannah. Has been in communion nine years. The congregation numbers 200 persons. The church property is worth \$10,000, and is owned by the congregation.

8. *Adolphus Delmotte*, age 28, born in Savannah, free born. Is a licensed minister of the Missionary Baptist Church of Milledgeville. Congregation numbering 300 to 400 persons. Has been in the ministry about two years.

9. *John Johnson*, age 51, born in Bryan County, Ga. Enslaved up to the time th Union army arrived. Owned by W.W. Lincoln of Savannah. Is class-leader and treasurer of Andrew's Chapel for sixteen years.

10. *March Haynes*, age 44, born a slave in Pocatigo, S. C., March 4, 1825. Haynes elected a deacon of the Wilmington Baptist Church in 1849 by the Rev. Jack Watry. Still in bondage, Haynes was later removed to the Savannah area in 1858, member of the First African Baptist Church of Savannah. Following the fall of Fort Pulaski in April 1862, Union General David Hunter's Gen. Order No. 7 allowed for the emancipation of slaves in coastal Georgia. March Haynes became a successful recruiter and smuggler of fugitive slaves, credited in putting many of his race over on the Union side during the war.

Profile selected from the "Minutes of an Interview between the Colored Ministers and Church Officers at Savannah with General Sherman, January 12, 1865." See Resource #10.



#1. African-American life in Savannah before & after the Civil War (cont'd)

B. Writing Exercise

Using the resources listed below, each pair or trio of students will write a short (one or two paragraph) description of African-American life in Savannah before the war. Each description will vary, because there were a variety of African-American experiences in Savannah before the war. The description should use evidence related to:

the geography and landscape - what was the area like?

the economy - what kinds of work were African-Americans doing?

the population - who were the African-Americans in Savannah?

social factors - literacy, religion, etc.



Slaves picking cotton outside Savannah, Henry McAlphin's Hermitage Plantation, Savannah, Slave quarters at Hermitage. Library of Congress



#2. Securing Freedom

A. The idea of freedom: Write and Discuss

Teacher note: "Freedom" is a word that many people use without thinking. It has different meanings in different contexts. Take a few minutes to help students think about their own notions of the word "freedom" by asking them to do some free-writing in response to these prompts, or think of prompts that relate to your student's specific experiences.

- i. What does the word "freedom" mean to you?
- ii. Are you free?
- iii. Are you more free or less free than your parents or guardians?
- iv. What does it take to make sure that people have freedom?

Ask students to share some of their ideas. Emphasize the differences between the legal category of "freedom" as opposed to "enslavement" and the other factors - such as economic sufficiency, social organization, etc. - that can affect whether a person is in fact free.

B. Group Reading Activity

What did the US Government do to secure the freedom of African-American during the war? What did African-Americans do to secure their own freedom?

In this "jigsaw" activity, half of the class will examine primary documents to understand the steps the US Government took to secure the freedom of African-Americans in and around Savannah during the war. The other half of the class will examine primary documents to understand what African-Americans in the Savannah area did to secure their own freedom. Once each group has (cont'd)



#2. Securing Freedom (cont'd)

done its own research, they will meet in groups of four to share what they learned. Then students will return to their role groups (pairs and trios) and add what they have learned to their description of African-American life in Savannah.

Group 1: US Government: For students who have odd-numbered leader roles, see these resources:

- #5 - Barton letter re: slaves coming into Union lines
- #8 - Hunter/Lincoln Letters re: Hunter's Field Order
- #9 - Emancipation Proclamation

Group 2: African-Americans: For students who have even-numbered leader roles, see these resources:

- #1 - Segment from Higginson journal
- #5 - Barton letter re: slaves coming into Union lines
- #14 - Excerpts of Susie King Taylor's Reminiscences, Part II

C. Writing

In their role pair or trios, students add a paragraph to their descriptions of African-American life in Savannah based on what they have learned about securing freedom. Their paragraphs should answer the following:

What was the US Government doing to secure the freedom of African-Americans in Savannah during the Civil War?

What were African-Americans doing to secure their freedom?



#3. African-American Views on Securing Freedom

A. Context for General Sherman's Meeting

Note to teachers: Explain to students: In January 1865, US General William T. Sherman called a meeting of African-American leaders in Savannah to provide him information as he created a plan for the future of African-Americans in the area. The leader you have been writing about (Learning Activity #1) is invited to this meeting, and will be expected to share his ideas. What have you learned about African-American life in Savannah, and the ways that the US and African-Americans helped secure freedom, will help you in deciding how you will answer Sherman's questions.

B. Sherman's questions:

The class brainstorms the kinds of questions that Sherman will ask. Use the categories here to get students thinking; encourage them to be specific in imagining the questions that Sherman will ask, as this will help them be better prepared to answer the questions.



Union Gen. William T. Sherman

General categories of questions that Sherman asked:

How do African-Americans in Georgia in 1865 understand the meaning of slavery, freedom, and emancipation?

How do African-Americans in Georgia in 1865 view their future? How can the US Government help?

What is the responsibility of the US Government to the newly freed slaves?

What is the responsibility of the US Government to those African-Americans who serve in the US military?



#3. African-American Views on Securing Freedom

C. Prepare for the meeting:

Students work in role groups (pairs or trios) to plan their answers to the questions that they expect Sherman will ask. Students have their writing from Learning Activities #1 and #2, as well as the resources for each activity. They also have the resources for Learning Activity #3, which includes the official notes from the January 1865 meeting with Sherman. Students will notice that at the meeting only one representative was selected to speak for all of the African-American leaders. In recreating the meeting, each leader will be able to express his own opinion.

To prepare, students should ask themselves questions such as:

Would the leader I'm representing agree with the comments in the notes?

Would they disagree?

What would their response be?

Students should draw on the specific information they collected in Learning Activities #1 and #2 to shape their responses. Students should plan responses to each of the questions that the class brainstormed in part B above.



#3. African-American Views on Securing Freedom

D. Recreate the January, 1865 meeting with Sherman

Role play the meeting in class, with the teacher taking the role of Sherman and the US Government representatives and one student from each role group representing his leader. The teacher should solicit at least two responses per question, reinforcing the idea that different African-American leaders would have answered the questions differently. This role play should take at least 30 minutes.

Resource : Doc. 10 - Notes from Sherman meeting



Green-Meldrim house, General Sherman's Savannah headquarters.

Assign two or three students to serve as note-takers during the meeting. Their notes will be useful to the students for Learning Activity #4.