About This Guide

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- Guide/episode introductions
- Historical context
- Secondary-level activities/extensions

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**Introduction**

*…the whole history of the United States comes walking over the hill behind a line of people in chains. Changes that reshaped the entire world began on the auction block where enslaved migrants stood or in the frontier cotton fields where they toiled…enslaved African Americans built the modern United States, and indeed the entire modern world, in ways both obvious and hidden.*

– Edward E. Baptist, Historian

Based on Lawrence Hill’s novel of the same name, the CBC series *The Book of Negroes* is an exploration of slavery in North America through the eyes and experiences of Aminata Diallo.

Aminata is the much-loved daughter of a midwife mother, with whom she “catches” babies, and an artisan father, who has taught her to read the Koran and write Arabic. Kidnapped by enslavers as a young girl, she endures: a forced march in shackles to the coast, branding with a hot iron, a whipping so severe it opens her back, the middle passage across the Atlantic, and her sale as chattel to an indigo plantation owner. These trials mark the beginning of her story and harden her determination to find her way home.

**Historical Context**

When Christopher Columbus returned to Europe from his 1492 voyage across the Atlantic, word of lands previously unknown spread rapidly. So began what has been named in generations of history books the “Age of Discovery.” For those outside of Europe, in the America’s, Africa and India, this age might more aptly have been named an “Age of Destruction.”

What Europe’s sea-faring powers “discovered” were human, mineral and agricultural riches that would fill the coffers of monarchies and build empires. Labour intensive plantation systems were established along the Eastern Seaboard of what would become the United States. These plantations would fuel the Industrial Revolution with the raw materials required to make rum, cloth, tobacco and other mass produced goods. The forced labour of enslaved Africans made possible America’s rise as an economic super-power.

Unlike other slaving systems that have existed for thousands of years in human history, the chattel system gave its victims no more rights than a chair or pair of shoes or any other form of simple property. Enslavers were permitted to do whatever they wished with their human “property” — up to and including taking their lives. Enslaved men, women and children had no domain over their own bodies. Parents had no claim to their own children.

This is the world in which Aminata’s story unfolds. The viewer is invited to cultivate and explore a deeper understanding of the complexities, brutality and lasting effects of slavery.

This history continues to resonate in our current social and economic structures, and forms of racialized oppression persist in both Canada and the United States. *The Book of Negroes* series along with this teacher resource guide can be used to engage with and interrupt this thread of history.
Curriculum Connections

This guide provides opportunities for teachers and students to explore the complexities of the institution of slavery and understand the central role it has played in shaping our contemporary world.

The series and guide are ideal cross-curricular resources. Curriculum intersections cover a broad range of subject areas including many social science courses, economics, law, philosophy, history, literature, drama, visual arts and the sciences.

The following examples are a starting point:

**SECONDARY**

**Economics** – Economic institutions; industrialization; labour as commodity; capitalism; trade; globalization; economics and law.

**History** – Canadian; American; diasporas; migration; ancient civilizations; the world up to 1900.

**Law** – International law (de las Casas vs. Sepulveda/Amistad); human rights; Indigenous people and law; constitutional law; policing; profiling.

**Literature/Drama** – Slave narratives; long list of African, African-American and African-Canadian authors of fiction and non-fiction; oral literature.

**Philosophy** – Human nature; ethics; metaphysics; social and political philosophy; epistemology

**Sciences/Math** – Immunization; botany (medicinal uses); allopathic vs. traditional medicines; midwifery; astronomy (Dogon); iron metallurgy; kente cloth and math; ethnomathematics.

**Social Sciences** – SOCIOLOGY: Social identity; socialization; families; class and status inequality; feminism; education; work and economy; politics; globalization; demographic change. PSYCHOLOGY: Social psychology of racism; stereotype threat; resilience; trauma; mental illness; cultural psychology. ANTHROPOLOGY: Culture; cultural change; cultural assimilation; cultural psychology; collectivism vs. individualism.

**Visual Arts** – African influences on proto-cubist and modernist art and architecture; sculpture; bronze casting; kente cloth creation.

**ELEMENTARY**

**Social Studies/ History** – Early settlers in Canada; the American Revolution; Loyalists; conflict; early societies; interactions; communities in Canada; British North America; immigration.

**Language** – Fiction and non-fiction literature on Black history and by Black authors; African oral tradition; media literacy.

**The Arts** – Drama; visual arts; cultural traditions and innovations; music; multimedia technologies.

Where possible, connections to text and media resources will be provided to deepen classroom explorations connected to different subject areas.
**Impact on Viewers**

The social identities and life experiences of students will shape how they see, feel and understand *The Book of Negroes* series. The content may be new to some students and reflect the ancestry of others. Other students may have no immediately apparent reference points in their experience or ancestry, yet live in a modern world constructed atop the narrative of slavery. Exploring this material will fill out their understanding of both historical and contemporary Western societies.

To maximize learning and insight, educators can create opportunities for students to explore their social identities prior to and throughout the viewing experience. Issues of “race,” gender, culture and class are themes woven through the series. Providing students with opportunities to explore how they understand the world through these lenses will lead to viewing experiences that are shaped more by inquiry than bias.

**Content Warnings**

**Language**

This series contains language that is offensive. The word “nigger” is used casually at several points throughout the series and is, in its use, historically accurate. As part of the “un-naming” of enslaved Africans, it played a significant role in dehumanizing and stripping them of their individuality in a single utterance.

Additionally, African-American men are sometimes referred to as “bucks” in the series. This is a term used to refer to animals, not human beings. Taking opportunities to focus on naming and labelling will help students understand the power of language and the specific role it plays both in the series and in life in divesting others of their personhood.

**Sexual Violence**

At several points in the series, there is both implied and actual sexual violence against Aminata and other enslaved women. The inclusion of this violence is essential to understand how severely slavery dehumanized and disempowered both African women and men.

**Sexuality**

Sexual activity between Aminata and Chekura in several scenes serves as a humanizing contrast to scenes of sexual violence, showing instead a loving, consensual union.

**Violence**

There are many scenes of violence in the series. They include different forms of brutality against enslaved men, women and children, the violence of war, and the psychological violence of dehumanization. These are accurate, perhaps even mild depictions of historical fact that spare the viewer the full force and range of violence enacted during this time period.

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**IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL TEACHERS:**

Before viewing *The Book of Negroes* series with your students, please be sure to preview each episode to identify age-appropriate scenes.

For Elementary, Intermediate or Middle Years classes, we’ve made scene suggestions in each section of this guide.
Previewing Activity: Lenses on the World

This activity helps to ground students in an understanding that each of us sees the world through a set of lenses linked to who we are and what we have experienced. The purpose of the exercise is to have students consider these lenses — and step beyond them — as they learn about the worlds of others and the intricate threads of history that bind us to one another.

1. Have students create a diagram of circles as shown. Each student should write their name in the centre and then fill in each circle with specific information about themselves.
Here are some suggested categories for the circles. Adjust as you see fit for the available class time and age level:

**Ethnicity:** Membership in a group that shares language, culture, nationality, religion, etc.

**Biological Sex:** There are three sexes: male, female and intersexed. Males and females are clearly genetically and anatomically one sex or the other. Intersexed persons may be ambiguous genetically and/or anatomically.

**Gender:** Gender reflects the cultural expectations placed on males and females. It varies from place to place and across time. Gender identification does not always match biological sex.

**Class:** Refers to socioeconomic status and can include poor, working poor, working class, middle class, etc.

**“Race”:** This is a socially constructed idea that has no biological basis. There is only one human race. Using this idea, people continue to identify both themselves and others as Black, white, Asian, etc.

**Age:** Self-explanatory.

**Ability/Disability:** Refers to both visible and invisible diversities that include mobility, sight and hearing, medical conditions, cognitive variability, etc.

**Geographic Region:** Refers to where we live, whether a rural, urban, suburban or remote location.

**Faith/Religion:** Refers to formal and informal spiritual beliefs and practices. Includes denominations of large faith groups.

**Family Structure:** Refers to family configurations including nuclear, extended, blended, single parent, etc.

**Education:** Refers to the highest level of education completed.

**Ancestry:** Refers to origins of known ancestors and can be more complex than ethnic identification.

2. **Facilitate** a class discussion on the various aspects of social identity focused on the questions below. Biological sex and gender could be good starting points.

a) What experiences have you had related to each aspect of your identity that you think someone outside your group may not have had?

b) How easy or difficult is it to explain these experiences to someone who does not share this aspect of your identity?

c) What experiences might you not understand as an outsider to a particular identity group?

d) How might all these aspects of your identity shape the way you see and experience other people?
Extension: Experiments on Discrimination

Prior to conducting this exercise, show the PBS documentary *A Class Divided*, the story of Jane Elliot’s experiments on discrimination with third graders and adult correctional officers. A teacher resource guide for the program, is available online.


Episode 1: Stolen

Kidnapped by their tribal enemies in Africa or by the white sea captains who ferried them to these shores, despoiled of their customs, torn from their families and villages, countless African tribesmen were shunted across the Atlantic in the squalid holds of the ships. This nefarious traffic in human flesh, which had begun as a trickle, quickly became a torrent, until by 1860...one-sixth of the people then living in the so-called “land of the free” were in fact slaves.

James Mellon
Bullwhip Days pp xi-xii

Summary

Aminata is kidnapped while on a trek with her parents to deliver a baby. She is shackled in iron chains to a coffle with other men, women and children and forced to walk the 2,200 kilometer journey from her home in Bayo, in current day Niger, to the slave fort on Bunce Island on the coast of Sierra Leone.

After enduring the middle passage across the Atlantic, she is sold at a slave auction to the owner of an indigo plantation. There, her life begins as chattel – the property of Robinson Appleby.

Historical Context

Between 1500 and 1890 approximately 22 million people were taken from Africa and sold to the rest of the world (Inikori, p. 83). Much of this took place as a part of a “triangular trade.” Enslaved people were taken from Africa to the Americas and sold. Raw materials that were the product of their labour were then transported to Britain for manufacture into other goods, including the sugar cane for rum production. The manufactured goods were then used to purchase people that had been gathered by human traffickers at slave forts along the coast of Africa, such as the one on Bunce Island where Aminata was held.

People from different groups were involved in the kidnapping and transport of captives across the “big river.” This included Chekura, who himself became enslavd when he was of no further use to the enslavers.

Europeans were faced with both legal and moral dilemmas over the enslavement of other people. European law forbade the enslavement of Christians. Spanish jurist
Sepulveda argued that since Native North Americans were not Christian, it was legal to enslave them. Dominican Friar Bartolome de las Casas argued that since no attempts had been made to convert them to Christianity, it was not legal (Clayton). de las Casas won his case, but the ruling was reversed a year later by the Spanish crown because it made it difficult to take advantage of the great wealth of the “New World.”

Still, attempts to enslave Indigenous peoples failed to yield the labour force needed to work plantations. Many Africans were Muslim so it was legal to enslave them. Even after many enslaved Africans were converted to Christianity, the prohibition against enslaving Christians did not apply. Why?

The science of the time weighed in. Both Africans and Indigenous Peoples were seen as less than human. Over the span of slavery, this “science” claimed that they were less intelligent, less civilized and less human than Europeans (Gould). While it may not have been morally acceptable to enslave other human beings, it became acceptable to enslave those thought to be of inferior “races.”

Today, we know that there is only one race of humans and that despite skin colour, hair texture and other signifiers, we are all a part of a single species (Human Genome Project). Despite this knowledge, the seeds planted by beliefs about “race” that grew out of colonization and enslavement, persist today as racism.

**Key Terms**

**Bunce Island**
18th century British slave castle on the Sierra Leone River from which enslaved Africans were shipped to South Carolina and Georgia in the United States.

**Chattel**
Personal property.

**Coffle**
A line of enslaved people shackled with iron manacles, often around their necks, hands and feet, who were chained together and forced to march to a destination at which they would be sold as labour.

**Indigo**
A plant from which an extract is used to produce a blue dye. The high demand for indigo resulted in increased demands for enslaved labour on plantations in South Carolina.

**Djeli**
Also *jali*, *jeli* or *griot*. Within several African oral traditions, a historian. Means of the accurate transmission of multiple forms of knowledge across generations.

**Middle Passage**
The passage in the hold of a slave ship across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. Human traffickers often packed enslaved men, women and children head-to-foot to maximize the number of humans they could carry. Conditions on slave ships were unbearable. There were little or no toilet facilities so outbreaks of diarrheal and other diseases were not uncommon. For more detailed information see the PBS companion site to their series, Africans in America: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html)

**Peruvian Bark**
Remedy for malaria.
Viewing Questions

1. Aminata described herself as a *djeli* — a teller of oral histories. People use many ways to transmit information from one generation to the next. What are some of these? What strategies do you think might be used to ensure accurate and detailed transmission of knowledge in each case?

2. How would you describe Aminata’s relationships with her parents? How and what does she learn from these relationships at an early age?

3. Who were the men that enslaved Aminata? What cultural groups do you think they came from? What does this tell you about the enslavement of African people on the world stage?

4. Aminata was asked to repeat the names of the men being held in the hold of the slave ship. Why? What does this symbolize given what is happening to them?

5. The auctioneer who presented Chekura to potential buyers referred to him as a “buck.” What does this mean and what does it signify about European beliefs/attitudes about African men?

6. What is it about Aminata that struck Georgia as remarkable? What attitudes did Georgia have about newly enslaved Africans? Does Aminata challenge these attitudes? How?
7. What was Georgia’s role regarding other enslaved people on the plantation? How do you know this? What does it suggest about knowledge in a time when it is illegal to educate persons of African descent?

8. When Aminata is physically mature, what new risks of maltreatment become a part of her reality? Can she protect herself?
ACTIVITIES/EXTENSIONS

Activity: The Long Walk

Using Google Maps, search directions from “Bayo, Niger” to “Bunce Island.”

Discussion Points
1. How long would it take to walk from Aminata’s Village to the slave fort on Bunce Island?
2. What challenges did those chained together in a coffle face on the journey?

Extension: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Visit the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health site on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):

   http://www.camh.ca/en/education/about/camh_publications/Pages/ptsd_brochure.aspx

Explore the causes and effects of PTSD. Have students assess the types of experiences encountered during the forced march and on the ship during the middle passage and discuss whether they would result in PTSD and what the effects of that might be on the lives of those so afflicted.

Activity: In the Hull of a Ship

Clear a space in your classroom that can accommodate everyone lying on the floor very uncomfortably. Have students lie on the ground, head-to-foot with the person next to them. Have them hold in place silently for 3 minutes. When they return to their seats debrief with the following questions:

1. How did it feel physically and emotionally?
2. How do you think it would feel physically and emotionally to spend most of each day for six weeks in this kind of confinement?
3. How would you feel about yourself? The other enslaved people? Those who had enslaved you?
4. What are some actions you might take as a result of this?
**Extension: Slave Ship Research**

Have students work in small groups to research a slave ship from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database:

http://slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces

**Sample questions:**

1. Which country’s flag did the vessel fly?
2. When did it begin transporting slaves? When did it stop?
3. How many slaves were put onboard the vessel in the African port? How many arrived alive?

The goal of this extension activity is to have students research the history of a vessel, the humans it transported, the conditions under which this transport occurred.

You can also visit the Lesson Plans section of the website for further ideas:

http://slavevoyages.org/tast/education/lesson-plans.faces

**Using the database:**

- In the top pull-down menu, select Voyages Database > Search the Voyages Database.
- From the left sidebar, select Ship, Nation, Owners > Vessel Name. This adds Vessel Name as search criteria to the Current Query box lower in the sidebar.
- In the Current Query box, enter the name of the vessel you’re searching and hit search.
- Both the initial Results tab and the Summary Statistics tab provide details that will help your research.
- In the Results tab you can also click on each Voyage Identification Number to view a summary of that particular trip, including the flag flown by each vessel.

**Further Extension**

If you have access to the film Amistad, show the slave ship scene.

*Warning: Preview this prior to using with your class. It is a graphic scene that includes violence and nudity.*
Activity: Decolonizing Our Language

The language used to explore this part of history does not represent the experiences and voices of the peoples victimized. An effort has been made in this teachers guide to decolonize the language used so that it reflects the perspective and impact on those most violated by the Transatlantic Enslavement. For example, you may have noticed that instead of the term “slave,” the phrase “enslaved men, women and children” is used. This rehumanizes those most affected by slavery, removing the connotation of commodity that “slave” holds.

Have students examine the list of words below. What alternatives could be used that more accurately reflect the experience from the perspective of the women, children and men who were kidnapped and forced to labour in captivity. Students will need to explore the implicit meanings of each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slave</th>
<th>Runaway</th>
<th>Fugitive</th>
<th>Settlers</th>
<th>Slave Trader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savage</td>
<td>Buck</td>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Discovery*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As in “discovery” of the New World

Research Project: Africa Prior to the Triangular Trade

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand the complexities of sovereign cultural groups in pre-colonial Africa and some of the impacts of transatlantic enslavement and colonization on these groups.

Break the class into groups of 4 or 5 students. Have students access the UNESCO book, *A General History of Africa, Volume 4: Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, available for download on UNESCO’s website:


Have each group select a cultural group from the table of contents and prepare a presentation for the rest of the class that includes, but is not limited to, topics such as:

1. Governance structures
2. Social organization
3. Technology
4. Trade/economics
5. Impact of the Triangular Trade

Each group should then research the region today and present information on contemporary issues. The CIA World Factbook is a good starting point for this information:

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please preview episodes and select age-appropriate scenes before viewing the series with your students.

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
Suggested scenes from Episode 1, Stolen:
• Beginning – 4:40
• 21:00 – 31:50 (right at the end of the text “He dies first”)
• 32:30 – 34:00
• 37:45 – 41:10

Viewing Questions

1. How would you describe Aminata’s relationship with her parents? What does she learn from her mother? What does she learn from her father?

2. How did the trading African peoples into slavery interrupt the lives of Aminata and her parents? What might their lives have been like if Aminata hadn’t been kidnapped?

3. How does Aminata reciting the names of fellow captives in the hull of the ship foretell Aminata becoming a djeli like she wanted?

4. Aminata was 11 when she was kidnapped and stolen from Africa, very close to your age. Try to imagine how it would feel for someone your age to be separated from their family against their will. What do you think they would feel?
Activities/Extensions

Activity: Exploring African History

“Slavery is not African history. Slavery interrupted African history.”

– Mutabaruka

1. Conduct research on the West African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay. Locate and record information on their:
   - location
   - government structure
   - rulers
   - economy
   - arts and science

   Based on your research, what can you conclude about early societies in Africa before the commencement of the transatlantic slave trade?

2. Captive Africans resisted their enslavement in many ways and at different stages of the transatlantic slave trade including on slave ships. In small groups, research to find examples of the ways that enslaved Africans resisted their forced condition. In a class discussion, talk about how these different acts of resistance reveal the way enslaved African's thought about their humanity and freedom.

   African Insurrections on Board Slave Ships:

   Slave Rebellions:

   How Did Slaves Resist Slavery?:
   [http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/How-Did-Slaves-Resist-Slavery.htm](http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/How-Did-Slaves-Resist-Slavery.htm)

   Slave Resistance at Work:
Reflection: Understanding Media

Use the CBC Book of Negroes Companion Features – Portraits and Passages to get more information and insight into the characters and history behind the series:

http://www.cbc.ca/bookofnegroes/experience/

1. See the CBC interview “Meet the Book of Negroes’ Young Aminata, with Shailyn Pierre-Dixon”:


   After watching the first episode and this interview, what other questions would you have for Shailyn Pierre-Dixon about her role as young Aminata?

2. Whose point of view is this dramatic series told from? How do you know?

Making Text-to-Series Connections

There are many books that provide opportunities to further explore various aspects of the series:


The Middle Passage, White Ships/Black Cargo by Tom Feelings; John Henrik Clarke.


The Viceroy of Ouidah by Bruce Chatwin, Vintage Classics, 1999.
Episode 2: Owned

As Smith remembered, “Long Peggy's” status among her fellow slaves rested on her master's assessment of her as an efficient breeder of slaves. Indeed, her master predicated her future freedom on the birth and survival of her twenty-fifth child… Smith’s recollections… force us to dig deeper into the historical significance of coercive and violent forms of reproductive sex during slavery.

– Gregory D. Smithers, Associate Professor of History
Virginia Commonwealth University

WARNING: This episode contains physical, sexual and verbal violence and should be previewed prior to in-class viewing.

Summary

Aminata has grown into a beautiful young woman. Her enslaver, Robinson Appleby, rapes her, but Georgia’s medicine ensures she will not carry a child as a result of this violence.

Chekura learns of Aminata’s whereabouts and they are reunited and marry by “jumping the broom.” Their happiness is short-lived when Appleby discovers the child she gives birth to – May – is not his. Enraged that she has been intimate with a man of her own choosing, he takes the child while Aminata sleeps and sells her.

Appleby is eager to get rid of Aminata too. Impressed by her intelligence and skill, indigo inspector, Solomon Lindo, purchases Aminata. After Lindo’s wife and son succumb to small pox, Lindo asks her to accompany him on a trip to New York. When Aminata discovers that Lindo brokered the sale of her daughter, May, she is determined to use this trip to emancipate herself.

Context

In 1636, the first slave carrier was built and launched from Massachusetts. The ship was named “Desire” (PBS). In 1662, Virginia passed a law of hereditary slavery, consigning all persons born of an enslaved mother to enslavement for life. By the time Aminata set foot on Sullivan Island in South
Carolina, that colony had a comprehensive “Negro Act” in place that made it illegal for enslaved people to assemble in groups, raise their own food, earn money or learn to read English. These measures ensured that enslaved persons would not become self-sufficient or be able to purchase their freedom.

The plantation owners who gained enormous wealth from agriculture in the American South drew captive labour from two sources: Africa and the breeding of enslaved women and men. One formerly enslaved man, John Smith, recounts how his owner, a preacher, “raised” 300 slaves from two women, giving one her freedom as promised after she delivered her 25th child to him. On the same plantation, the white overseer is reported by Smith to have produced 160 enslaved children through non-consensual acts of sexual violence (Smithers).

Willie McCollough recounts, “A slave occupied the same place on the plantation as a mule or horse did, that is a male slave. Some of the slave women were looked upon by the slave owners as a stock raiser looks upon his brood sows that is from the standpoint of production. If a slave woman had children fast she was considered very valuable because slaves were valuable property” (Work Projects Administration 177). Hillard Yellerday remembers that, “A slave girl was expected to have children as soon as she became a woman. Some of them had children at the age of twelve and thirteen years old. Negro men six feet tall went to some of these children” (Work Projects Administration 434).

The absence of control over their bodies, marriages, and the bearing and raising of children were at the core of the destruction of the family units of enslaved persons. In Toni Morrison’s, *Beloved*, a novel that explores the aftermath of slavery, the main character, Sethe, speaks of her reluctance to give her full love to her children while enslaved because she knows they could be sold from her at any time (Morrison). The social and cultural foundations that are typically laid by the family unit were methodically disrupted over the long duration of American enslavement, damaging generations beyond the end of slavery.

Literacy was recognized within this slaving system as a dangerous skill for enslaved persons to hold. Many states enacted laws forbidding teaching enslaved people to read or possess any written material (PBS). Much of this was in response to pockets of organized resistance that resulted in enslaved men and women violently overthrowing their enslavers. Such laws helped maintain the illusion that African Americans were less intelligent than their European-descended enslavers. The difference lay not in ability or potential, but in access to opportunities to learn and think.

Despite having no legal access to written knowledge, many enslaved people carried with them from Africa knowledge of medicine, architecture and other arts and sciences that they then passed on to subsequent generations.
Key Terms

Bukra
Term used by enslaved people to refer to white people. The term is imbued with contempt.

Catalyst
Any substance that speeds up a chemical reaction. Aminata describes urine as a catalyst in the extraction and preparation of the blue dye that comes from indigo.

“Fishnet”
Oral network along a river used by enslaved people to communicate across distances.

Small Pox
Also referred to as “the pox”; a potentially deadly infectious disease caused by a virus. Used by the British in North America as biological warfare against Indigenous peoples through the distribution of the blankets of infected persons (Nester 114). Georgia used a technique known as variolation to immunize Aminata. This was a process used in Africa, India and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) by physicians to create immunity to small pox by rubbing the powdered scabs from the sores of infected people into superficial scratches on a person’s skin (U.S. National Library of Medicine). This would produce a mild version of the illness that would build antibodies to protect them from future infection.
**Viewing Questions**

1. Why does Georgia hide the book from Appleby? What might happen if it were discovered?

2. Aminata narrates the following: “The words of Negroes swim the rivers all the way from Savannah to Charleston. If you set out word for a person, sooner or later, an answer will come back in the fishnet.” What does this suggest about the way enslaved people communicate and attempt to forge an extended community? What other methods do you think they might have used?

3. Why does Georgia cut Aminata and rub the fibre from a person infected with small pox in the wound? What does this suggest about Georgia’s knowledge? Where or how might she have acquired this knowledge?

4. What does Solomon Lindo notice about Aminata that impresses him? Why is this impressive?

5. What act of resistance does Aminata engage in while Appleby is entertaining the Lindos?

6. What does Georgia give Aminata after she is raped by Appleby? Why?
7. What ceremony marks the beginning of the marriage between Aminata and Chekura? What do you think this symbolizes?

8. What is Appleby expressing about his relationship to Aminata when he publicly shames her and shaves her head? What is he saying to the other enslaved people forced to watch this?

9. Why does Appleby sell both May and Aminata?

10. Solomon Lindo is presented as a liberal character. When he finds Aminata in her room with Chekura, what does his reaction tell you about the limits of his liberal thinking? Does he recognize their right to marry as the same as his own? What leads you to this conclusion?

11. What is Lindo’s justification for arranging the sale of May? What does this say about him?
Activities/Extensions

Activity: What is Race?

The purpose of the following activities is to have students explore the concept of race as a social idea rather than as a biological reality. Many of the stereotypes associated with persons of African descent flow from beliefs that there are inherent (immutable) characteristics along group lines that shape intelligence, impulse control, criminality, etc. From the mid-1700s forward, science has played an active role in constructing these beliefs (Harding). While contemporary science has debunked these, they persist in our society. Understanding that race is an illusion is an important step toward seeing the full humanity of the enslaved peoples in the series, and understanding the depth of the injustice of enslavement.

Option 1:

Have students visit the following PBS site, Race: The Power of an Illusion, and work through the interactive exercises listed below:

http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

- **What is Race?** This exercise looks at “race” as a modern idea, the absence of a genetic basis for it, its use in the justification of slavery, and why “colour blindness” is problematic.

- **Sorting People** is an interactive exercise that demonstrates how difficult it is to “accurately” sort people by contemporary racial definitions.

- The **Race Timeline** is an interactive exploration of the following themes: Race, Science & Social Policy; the Evolution of the Idea of Race; Changing Definitions; Different Rules for Whites; and In Search of Equality. Each allows for a more in-depth exploration of the both the idea of race and the consequences that flowed and continue to flow from it.

- **Human diversity** is an exploration of human difference through the lenses of genetics, biology and anthropology.

- **Me, My Race and I** is a compilation of the voices of people talking about their experiences with race and the effects it has on their daily lives.

To go deeper into the science of race, the PBS “Race and Science” page explores human genetics and race. Lesson plans are provided for elementary, middle and secondary classes:

Option 2:

The American Anthropological Association’s project “Race: Are We So Different?” has developed Middle School and High School teacher resource guides to support discussing race in the classroom:

Web site:
[http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html)

Middle School guide:

High School guide:

**Activity: Exploring Enslaved Narratives**

The purpose of this exercise is to take a deeper look into the lives of enslaved persons through their own eyes. There are many narratives available for free online. In some, the language is difficult to navigate as it reflects an attempt to transcribe interviews phonetically. These interviews are also problematic as most were conducted by non-African Americans who were uncomfortable speaking to Black people. Other narratives are published pieces written by enslaved and formerly enslaved persons who were able to read and write. Examples of such narratives that can be used in classrooms are below. Some of the language which is obviously offensive to the modern reader, reflects the realities of the times in which they were written.

- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself* by Harriet Jacobs (aka Linda Brent)
  Book: [http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11030](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11030)

- *Fifty Years in Chains; Or the Life of an American Slave* by Charles Ball
  Book: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/40760/40760-h/40760-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/40760/40760-h/40760-h.htm)
  Audiobook (public domain): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1BIQ3al1cc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1BIQ3al1cc)

- *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup
  Book: [http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45631](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45631)
  Audiobook (public domain): [https://librivox.org/twelve-years-a-slave-by-solomon-northup/](https://librivox.org/twelve-years-a-slave-by-solomon-northup/)
Select excerpts from these texts that reflect aspects of enslaved life relevant to this episode. Examples of focus areas include:

- **Enslaved Families:** What challenges did they face? Were the challenges faced structural or individual? Both? How?

- **Women:** What particular vulnerabilities did enslaved women face? How did this shape how they felt about themselves? Their children? Their men? What strategies were used to challenge the potential violence they faced? Were they able to resist? If so, how?

- **Men:** What vulnerabilities did enslaved men face? How did this shape how they felt about themselves? Their children? Their women? Within a patriarchal social order what impacts did this have on their sense of masculinity? Were they able to resist? If so, how?

**Definition – Patriarchy**
A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

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**Extension: Contemporary Fiction – Beloved**

The novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison was inspired by the life of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who fled with her husband and four children to Cincinnati, Ohio. When “slave catchers” surrounded the house they were barricaded in, Margaret killed her two-year-old daughter with a butcher knife rather than see her return to slavery. Morrison’s *Beloved* grapples with the question of how such an act affects not only the mother’s life, but also the lives of her children and others around her.
IMPORTANT NOTE
Please preview episodes and select age-appropriate scenes before viewing the series with your students.

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
Suggested scenes from Episode 2, Owned:

- Beginning - 12:45 (when Appleby closes door)
- 15:15 – 16:50
- 17:17 – 35:00
- 37:05 – 39:10
- 40:05 – end

Viewing Questions

1. What kind of work did Aminata do on Appleby’s plantation in St. Helena, South Carolina when she was brought there as a child?

2. What kind of work did Georgia do? Refer to the portrait of Georgia on the CBC Book of Negroes Companion Features – Portraits and Passages:
   http://www.cbc.ca/bookofnegroes/experience/

3. Why did Georgia cut Aminata and rub the fibre from a person infected with small pox in her wound? What does this reveal about Georgia’s knowledge and skills? Where or how do you think she acquired this knowledge?

4. Describe Aminata’s skills and abilities that impress the Lindos.

5. What were some things that enslaved Africans were not permitted to do. How does Aminata resist against these prohibited activities?
Activities/Extensions

Reflection: Understanding Media

Perspectives play an important role in films. In this episode, several characters are introduced. Identify the different characters and describe each of their point of views.

Activity: Exploring Canadian Slave Narratives

“I was stolen from my parents when I was seven years old, and brought to Canada...I guess I was the first colored girl brought into Canada. The white men sold us at Niagara to old Indian Brant, the king. I lived with old Brant about twelve or thirteen years as nigh as I can tell.”

– Sophia Burthen Pooley, A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, 1855

"...John is yet among us, and we will let him tell his own story. It will be remembered that, though the ‘the importation of any Negro or other person to be subjected to the conditions of a slave into any part of Upper Canada’ was prohibited by the Act 33, Geo. 3, Cap. 7, yet the state of involuntary servitude in the Province was not abolished till afterwards."

– James Clelland Hamilton, Toronto Telegraph, Dec. 15, 1869

Like Aminata, thousands of children were stolen from Africa and enslaved in European colonies in North and South America. Children like Aminata’s baby May, were also born into enslavement in places where slavery was practiced, including Canada.

There are only two known first-hand accounts of Black individuals who were enslaved in Canada — Sophia Burthen Pooley and John Baker. Both were enslaved as children in Upper Canada (now Ontario).

Using guided reading strategies, read both narratives:

Sophia Pooley Narrative
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html#p192

John Baker Narrative
http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/educational-resources/war-of-1812/richard-pierpoint/john-baker/


Questions:

1. Who recorded each narrative? Why do you think they interviewed Sophia and John?

2. How did Sophia and John come to be enslaved?
3. What were some of the challenges they faced?

4. How did Sophia and John receive their freedom?

**Activity: Analyzing Canadian Slave Ads**

"Wanted, A NEGRO boy, 12 or 14 years of age. Good pay will be given. Inquire of the printer."

– Niagara Herald, November 18, 1801 to January 9, 1802

"To be sold, A Black woman named Peggy, aged forty years, and a black boy, her son, named JUPITER, aged about fifteen years, both of them the property of the subscriber. The woman is a tolerable cook and washerwoman, and perfectly understands making soap and candles. The boy is tall and strong for his age, and has been employed in the country business, but brought up principally as a house servant. They are each of them servants for life. The price of the woman is one hundred and fifty dollars. For the boy two hundred dollars, payable in three years, with interest from the day of sale, and to be secured by bond &c. But one-fourth less will be taken for ready money."

– Upper Canada Gazette, February 10, 1806

"To be sold at public auction, on Monday the 3rd of November, at the house of Mr. John Rider, two Slaves, viz.: a boy and girl, about eleven years old; likewise, a puncheon of choice old cherry brandy, with sundry other articles."

– Halifax Gazette, November 1, 1760

"Wanted to purchase a negro girl from seven to twelve years of age of good disposition. For fuller particulars apply to the subscribers, W. & J. Cooke, West Niagara, Oct. 4th."

– Gazette and Oracle, October 11, 1797
Examine each slave advertisement and identify:

- the owner
- the enslaved person
- location where they were enslaved
- the enslaved person’s skills
- the description of the enslaved person

What was the purpose of slave advertisements? What do they reveal about that time in Canadian history?

**Making Text-to-Series Connections**

**Suggested books:**


Episode 3 – Escape to Revolution

Despite his ownership of scores of enslaved African Americans, Jefferson recognized that the selling of human beings could turn his souring natural-rights rhetoric into a lie….Eventually, Jefferson embraced the hypocrisy, even failing to free the enslaved woman who bore his children. “Sally – an old woman worth $50,” read the inventory of his property taken after his death.

— Edward E. Baptist, Historian
Cornell University

Summary

Aminata travels to New York with Solomon Lindo as planned. There is great unrest in the colonies. War is breaking out between the British and the American rebels and Lindo must return home before the British close the harbour. With help from tavern owner, Samuel Francis, Aminata seizes her opportunity to escape into the woods until Lindo has departed for good.

As a literate midwife, Aminata quickly establishes herself as a valuable member of Canvas Town, a tent settlement of freed and escaped African Americans in New York City. She is valued beyond this community, helping to deliver the baby of a Black prostitute and a British Officer who has secured her services in an exclusive and possibly loving relationship.

After Chekura finds Aminata once again, a debate ensues over which side of the conflict will support freedom for African Americans. Samuel sides with the Americans, while Chekura supports the British, following them into battle on their promise of freedom to any “negro” who fights alongside them.

When American independence is declared, Aminata knows that her freedom is once again threatened and that Solomon Lindo can return and claim her as his property.

Context

By the time Aminata reached New York, there were 13 British colonies that were banding together to challenge the British practice of taxation without representation. For 1,500 years, what is now New York City was a part of the homelands of the Lenape indigenous peoples. It was first colonized by Europeans in the early 1600s (Mushabac and Wigan). Until the British claimed it in 1664, it was under Dutch control. The first enslaved Africans were brought to the
colony in 1626. Unlike the subsequent system of chattel slavery established under British and then American rule, for a short while under Dutch rule, “The enslaved men can be baptized, marry, own property, and work for themselves when not required for company tasks. They can sue and bear witness against whites.” (Mushabac and Wigan 7) In fact, the first Black family to own land in the colony, used their resources to buy and free slaves. In the 1730s nearly 1,500 slaves were brought to the city and sold at the foot of Wall Street (Mushabac and Wigan 23). It was not until 1785 that New York passed a gradual emancipation law, prohibiting the importing of slaves and allowing owners to free their enslaved people easily (PBS).

The New York City that Aminata encounters has an historically mixed relationship with both the idea and practice of racialized slavery, and it is in this, she finds limited safety among the other people of African descent in Canvas Town. Canvas Town, on Manhattan Island was one of two tent cities to which the British relocated escaped enslaved people until they were transported to other places, including Maritime Canada (Foote).

The American fight for independence from British rule was fueled by idealism focused on justice and freedom for all. This did not, however, include the enslaved men, women and children who laboured for generations under slavery’s yoke. Several of the founding fathers owned human beings. Others of them fathered children with the women they owned. For example, DNA tests done in 1999 on African Americans who claimed direct decent from Thomas Jefferson, proved that he had fathered children with Sally Hemmings, whom he owned (Cogliano). Jefferson became the third president of the United States, and was the principle author of the Declaration of Independence. When he penned the line in the Declaration that, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” he did not intend to include the masses of enslaved men, women and children whose labour was foundational in establishing the American economy. Indeed, Jefferson states in his Notes on the State of Virginia, that:

“I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them? This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people” (Jefferson).

Enslaved bodies were used not only for financial gain, but also for political gain. One well-known example of this is the Three-Fifths Compromise that secured the agreement of Southern states to join the new union. While slave-owning states were not required to give voting rights to enslaved adults, they were able to factor them into their population figures. Each would be the equivalent of three-fifths of a person, a calculation that greatly increased the political power of slave-owning states in the South (Baptist).
There is much that has happened in the world to this point that has systematically dehumanized persons of African descent. The notion that there are different degrees of humanness, entered the popular consciousness through slavery and a race “science” that was rapidly growing in the Western world. In 1735, Carl Linnaeus, author of our system of classification of living things, describes *Homo Sapiens Afer* (people of African descent) as lazy, unpredictable and unintelligent. Samuel Morton later “determines” by measuring skulls of different racialized groups that Africans are the least intelligent of all humans. (His assumption that there is a relation between skull size and intelligence is incorrect, as were his measurements and selection of subjects.) While contemporary science has debunked both the notion that there are different races and that they are differently endowed with qualities such as intelligence, stereotypes established as justifications for enslavement persist today (Gould).

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**Key Terms**

**Bounty hunter**
Someone paid to find and return a person considered to be a fugitive.

**Canvas Town**
Tent town occupied by escaped and former enslaved persons.

**Constitution**
The set of principles on which a nation is founded; the framework for all other laws within that nation.

**Manumission**
The legal release of an enslaved person to freedom.

**Revolutionary War**
The war fought by American rebels against the British to establish the initial 13 colonies that formed the United States of America.

**Three-Fifths Compromise**
The binding agreement between the 13 colonies that allowed slave-holding states to count enslaved persons as 3/5 human for the purposes of ensuring greater representation in government.
**Viewing Questions**

1. When Aminata sees Canvas Town, she asks Lindo, “What’s that?” He tells her, “It’s Canvas Town. It’s very dangerous. Stay away from it. The negroes there are always willing to relieve you of your goods.” Aminata responds, “But are they free?” Lindo tries to correct her saying, “The question is how they live.” What does this short exchange say about Solomon Lindo’s view of Aminata’s humanity and its relation to her enslaved status?

2. What is Aminata resisting when she writes her name in the ledger of Samuel Francis’ inn? Why is it important to her that Mr. Francis says her name aloud?

3. Samuel Francis is the son of an enslaved woman and a plantation owner. He was manumitted when he was 25 and sent with money to start his own business away from his birthplace in Jamaica. What possible explanations might there be for this?

4. The rebels speak of freedom from their enslavement under British rule. What are the contradictions between their views of their own rights and those of enslaved African Americans? What does this suggest?

5. Why does Berthilda use the demeaning term “buck” to describe Black men? What does this suggest about the impact of generations of enslavement on both enslaved and freed African Americans?

6. “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal…” These words become a part of the American Constitution. What impact does it have on the viewer (you) when it is delivered by a rebel in Sam’s tavern?
7. What aspects of their respective life experiences do you believe contribute to the different political positions assumed by Aminata, Chekura and Sam? Explain.

8. Why was Aminata referred to as “One Pound Meena?” What does this tell you about her character?

9. How are many Black women in New York used by white men? How is it suggested that their babies are valued?


11. How does Aminata’s status change when the revolutionary war is over? Explain.
Activities/Extensions

Activity: The Other Side of the Border?

As Canadians, we often pride ourselves in being unlike Americans and others when it comes to racism. This exercise is designed to help students define, understand and identify racism in our own backyard.

Begin by having students read the Huffington Post article, “The 10 Most Racist Incidents of 2014: Canadian Edition”:

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/rachel-decoste/racism-in-canada_b_6401578.html

If you have not covered the activities on race from the previous episode, revisit this so that students have a good understanding that there is a single human race and that race is a social idea, not a biological reality.

Discussion/Research Questions:

1. What historically racist practice is reflected in “Subban’s Sochi Snub?” Where did the practice originate? What keeps it alive in the popular consciousness today?

2. What is a hate crime? How should our laws address hate crimes? What provisions are in place in the Criminal Code of Canada to address crimes that include aspects of hate?

3. Compare the comments and depictions of Olivia Chow during the recent Toronto mayoral race, with war-time depictions of other reviled groups. What similarities or differences do you see.

4. Why was a Black man prevented from seeking shelter during the recent shooting in Ottawa? His story is also featured in the University of Ottawa’s student newspaper, the Fulcrum:


Do you think assumptions may have been made that became potentially life-threatening actions? If so, what were these assumptions? What impact might this have on the student who was prevented from seeking shelter? What impact might it have on those who barred his entrance to safety?

5. The article asks, “Is there nothing more insulting than members of the dominant culture instructing minorities how to feel about their own depiction?” What are the issues reflected in this statement?

6. Do you think stereotypes feed the types of responses to racist bullying described in the article? If so, what are these stereotypes? How do you think persons in positions of authority should respond to occurrences such as those described in Westport, Newfoundland and Georgina, Ontario?
7. What are the differences in perceptions of violence perpetrated by “mainstream” Canadians and those enacted by “ethnic” Canadians? Is there anything wrong with the distinction between the two? (Hint: everyone has ethnicity.)

8. What types of policies, practices and initiatives would work toward eradicating racism in Canada?

Activity: A Girl Like Me – Internalizing Racism

In the 1940s, African-American psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark, conducted research on Black children’s attitudes about race. His findings showed a deep sense of inferiority in African-American children generated in large measure by the social contexts in which they lived. Their research findings contributed significantly to the decision in the United States to desegregate schools.

His doll experiments have been replicated with similar results between the 1940s and today.

- Show the video, A Girl Like Me:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWyI77Yh1Gg

- Have students discuss pressures they face considering aspects of their identities explored in the previewing activity (see p. 4).

- Given what students have learned about the origins of stereotypes about African-descended peoples, discuss why so many of these children have internalized negative self-concepts that are linked to race.

- Have students discuss how this might be changed in a deep and meaningful way as a social problem (rather than as an individual issue).
IMPORTANT NOTE

Please preview episodes and select age-appropriate scenes before viewing the series with your students.

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
Suggested scenes from Episode 3, Escape to Revolution:
- 6:45 – 9:35
- 12:00 – 14:40
- 24:18 – 28:00

Viewing Questions

1. Identify the ways in which Sam Fraunces is different from Aminata and other Black people making their way to Manhattan, New York. How did he obtain his freedom?

2. What is Canvas Town?

3. The main theme in this episode is freedom. Who is seeking freedom? How does each pursue their freedom? How are their ideas of freedom similar? Different?

4. What does Aminata do to take care of herself? What is the nickname that she earns? How does she contribute to Canvas Town?

5. How is Aminata’s and Chekura’s relationship tested yet again in this episode?
6. After the outbreak of the American Revolution, Black people in Canvas Town could either support the Patriot Rebels or the British Tories. Use a T-chart to describe the arguments that were made in support of each side. Identify characters that supported each side. If you were in the audience when Aminata read Dunmore’s Proclamation, which side would you choose and why?

7. At the end of the episode we learn that the Patriots won the American Revolution. What would this mean for the Black community in New York? What did Sam predict about Aminata?
Activities/Extensions

Reflection: Understanding Media

The Book of Negroes series was filmed in several locations. Read the CBC News article from January 7, 2015, “The Book of Negroes shot in Nova Scotia, airs tonight,” for information on the set locations:


Why were several locations used? Guess which scenes were shot in which locations. How can you tell? What do you think are some of the effects of location filming? If you can recognize the locations where scenes were shot, does it distract you from the story or add something to it?

Activity: Exploring the Book of Negroes

“I began to feel the happiness, liberty, of which I knew nothing before.”
– Boston King, Black Loyalist

1. Research and identify the causes of the American Revolution. How did this conflict impact the provinces of Canada?

2. In conversation with Aminata, Sam explains the movement of ships and the flow of goods and enslaved Africans, a pattern of commercial activity known as the transatlantic slave trade. Draw and label a diagram that illustrates the triangular movement of goods.

3. Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, which Aminata reads out to the men and women of Canvas Town, was issued in November of 1775. It offered freedom to Black people in exchange for their service to the British army. Read the transcription of the proclamation:

http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-revolution/4238

a) The proclamation states that the enslaved Black traitors (people not loyal to the king or the Patriot rebels) can come to fight for the British and they will be free. Enslaved Black people held by Loyalists were not included. Why do you think Lord Dunmore made such a proclamation? Share your ideas about Lord Dunmore's motives and strategic reason for the issuing of this proclamation.

b) Working with a partner, analyze the image and the transcription of Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation by answering these document analysis questions:

- What type of document is this?
- Look at the picture of the original document. Do you notice anything about its physical appearance?
Making Text-to-Series Connections

Suggested videos:

*Canada: A People’s History*, CBC, Episode 5: A Question of Loyalties:

Suggested books:


Episode 4 – Book of Negroes

Under the new Fugitive Slave Act...white people...were now obligated to pursue runaways from one end of the country to another. Collective revolt against slavery also seemed long since foreclosed by patrols, militias, armories full of powder and ball that ensured that any future Nat Turner was like a bug waiting for the hammer.

– Edward E. Baptist, Historian
Cornell University

Summary

As the rebel victory over the British makes it possible for Solomon Lindo to return to New York, Aminata’s freedom is once again threatened. An opportunity to secure her freedom comes when a British offer gives Aminata the chance to assist in relocating those who fought in the Revolutionary War on the side of the British. She will be responsible for documenting — in an actual historical document called The Book of Negroes — the Black Loyalists who will be moved to Nova Scotia.

On the verge of freedom, the now pregnant Aminata is apprehended as a runaway enslaved person and once again separated from Chekura. Appleby’s attempt to fraudulently claim her as property is unsuccessful. Solomon Lindo proves that he is her legal owner and frees her.

Context

The newly formed nation of the United States of America was founded on a noble rhetoric of liberty and justice that did not apply to the many Indigenous nations already occupying the territory or to the enslaved Africans whose labour was required to maintain the country’s economic viability and growth.

As explored in the series in the different views expressed by Sam and Chekura, the roles of Black people during the revolutionary war involved, “…fighting as bearers of arms in the American militia or army or serving as spies and laborers or taking flight from slavery to fight ‘in the king’s service’ and after the war evacuating to Nova Scotia with the British.” (Nobles 61) Many African Americans chose their allegiances based on the possibility of freedom foremost.
Those who fled captivity and were living precariously in places such as Canvas Town, were vulnerable to changing fugitive slave laws and to slave patrols. When the British lost the Revolutionary War, those previously protected were now even more vulnerable to recapture and re-enslavement as dramatized by Claybourne Mitchell’s predicament in this episode. Slave patrols supplemented the authority of enslavers, identifying and re-kidnapping those who had fled captivity. Enslaved persons “… could easily be distinguished by their race and thus became easy and immediate targets of racial brutality. As a result, the new American innovation in law enforcement during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the creation of racially focused law enforcement groups in the American South.” (Hadden 4). This practice may have a modern-day parallel in what we now call “racial profiling.” In her book, Slave Patrons: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas, Hadden makes the connection between slave patrollers in the antebellum South and post-civil war law enforcement thus:

“Although slave patrols officially ceased to operate at the close of the Civil War, their functions were assumed by other Southern institutions. Their law-enforcing aspects—checking suspicious persons, limiting nighttime movement—became the duties of Southern police forces, while their lawless, violent aspects were taken up by vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan’s reign of racial terror in the late nineteenth century emphasized the most extreme elements of earlier slave patrol behavior” (Hadden 4).

During the antebellum period, African Americans were controlled by slave codes, fugitive slave laws and slave patrols. In the post-Civil War era, Black codes and Jim Crow laws applied by police forces took their place. Black codes were laws passed in Southern states that restricted the freedom of African Americans. Jim Crow laws were state and local laws that were in force until 1965 in the United States that enforced segregation between racialized groups in public facilities. While the segregation of persons of African descent is not enshrined in Canadian law, we have a history of segregating public spaces along “race” lines. The story of Viola Desmond’s ejection from the white section of a movie theatre in the 1940s and the unlegislated segregation of public schools in Ontario and Nova Scotia are examples of our historically informal approach to segregation. Oklahoman Blacks fleeing increasingly dangerous activity by the Ku Klux Klan migrated to Alberta in the early 1900s only to find that the Canadian government’s invitation to settlers did not really include them (Sadlier, Historica Canada: Black History Canada). Perhaps Canada’s only form of legislated segregation can be found by looking at both historical and contemporary versions of our Indian Act.

The British offer of sanctuary for Black Loyalists in its Nova Scotian colony, held the promise of freedom without fear of recapture and re-enslavement. The real Book of Negroes — http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/BN.asp — registered 3,000 loyalists/refugees who would be transported from the United States and settled on Canada’s East Coast between April and November of 1783. It also lists “fugitives” who were returned to their enslavers.
Key Terms

Antebellum
The period prior to the American Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all enslaved persons.

Black Codes
Laws enacted in Southern states following the civil war designed to restrict and criminalize the activities of African Americans. For example, it was a crime for a Black man to walk beside a railroad track or sell his produce from farming after dark. In all Southern states it was illegal to be in a state of unemployment so many were forced into working for former enslavers. This resulted in their return to a state of *de facto* slavery; that is, slavery had been abolished but the lives of formerly enslaved persons had few if any of the freedoms that should have flowed from emancipation.

Declaration of Independence
The 1776 Declaration of Independence from Britain made by the founding 13 American colonies. Drafted by Thomas Jefferson who would become the third President of the United States, it was not formally recognized by Britain until 1783 in the Treaty of Paris.

Jim Crow Laws
Segregation laws operating primarily (but not exclusively) in Southern states between 1877 and 1965. See Ferris State University’s online Jim Crow Museum:
http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm

Ku Klux Klan
Hate group established in the U.S. in 1866 (the year after enslaved persons emancipated) that still exists today. See History for more in-depth information. The Klan also has roots in Canada with the first chapter being established in Toronto in the mid-1920s.

For a history of the organization in the U.S., see:

For the history in Canada, see:
Viewing Questions

1. What risks were the people of Canvas Town faced with when the rebels won the war?

2. Were free-born Black people safe? Who posed a threat to them and why?

3. Why is Clark impressed by Aminata? How does he ascertain what he knows about her?

4. How does Chekura feel about his role in Aminata’s enslavement? How does she feel about it and about him? How might you explain their love for one another?

5. What impact do you think the reenslavement of Claybourne and many others like him had on their families?

6. What do the stories of those registered in the Book of Negroes by Aminata tell you about the people moving to Nova Scotia?

7. When Aminata is visited by Appleby in her cell, he tells her that she is coming home with him. She says that she is not, that she is a free woman. He says that “negroes” do not understand the meaning of freedom because if they did they would not bring their own people here. How/is this statement problematic? Discuss.
8. The Justice of the Peace asks Solomon Lindo what stake he has in Aminata’s case. What stake does he have beyond legally owning her? Why?

9. Samuel says that, “Freedom will come to every negro in America. It will take some time, but one day the Declaration of Independence will live up to its creed.” How long does it take? Is a person free simply because she or he is not enslaved? Explore this idea.
Activities/Extensions

Discussion: From Slave Patrols to Profiling

Recently the killing of unarmed Black men by police in the United States has sparked movements on both sides of the border addressing the status of Black males in the criminal justice system.

1. **Watch** The Price of Blackness, Parts 1 and 2:
   - Part 1: [https://vimeo.com/104659669](https://vimeo.com/104659669)
   - Part 2: [https://vimeo.com/105563786](https://vimeo.com/105563786)

2. **Discussion Focus**: Is this an exclusively American phenomenon or does it happen in Canada too?

3. **Read** Singled Out, a Toronto Star series based on analysis of police crime data showing justice is different for Blacks and whites:

4. **Write** a short essay discussing links between history and current patterns in the relationship between Black males and policing.

Activity: The Book of Negroes – Creating Fiction from Fact (Part 1)

Lawrence Hill’s novel is built atop historical fact. In this exercise, students will write extensions of the novel by researching the people, places and events of one person listed in the original Book of Negroes historical document.

1. Have students **browse** the Book of Negroes online at the Nova Scotia Archives:

   The transcription of the Book of Negroes can be used in conjunction with the Book of Negroes database to allow for an easier read for students (in the left sidebar, look for Documents and then locate Book of Negroes under Official Documents and Proclamations):
   - [http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm](http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm)

2. From there they can **choose one person** entered in the ledger about whom they will write a short, fictional biography. The document lists the name of the vessel on which they will sail to Nova Scotia, place of birth, “negro names,” age, description and remarks, sometimes including information about who owned them previously.

3. Conducting **online research**, have students gather further information on this person’s place of birth and other details given in the Remarks section.
4. Using the structure of the short story as a framework — introduction, initiating action, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution — have students create an outline for their story that shows how their character came to be listed in The Book of Negroes.

5. **Write** the story!

6. **Extension:** Have the students compile and publish (using an online self-publishing site) their class *Book of Negroes* short stories.

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**Activity: African Americans and the Law**

As part of a unit on international law, students will explore the history of one of the following: slave codes, fugitive slave laws, Black codes and Jim Crow laws. Their research will begin with the antebellum period and lead up to the Civil Rights Movement and the enactment of laws striking down legislation that discriminates against persons of African heritage.

Working in small groups assigned to one of the four types of law, students will research and prepare a presentation with a summary handout for all class members.

Students should then use their learning to explore Canada’s Indian Act to compare it to laws applied to African Americans:


Students will identify similarities and differences both in terms of the underlying principles and the outcomes for those governed by these laws.

**Extension:**

The rebellion of enslaved persons on the ship Amistad, and the ensuing legal battle to return the “rebels” to Africa, is often viewed as the first human rights case in the Americas.

1. View the film *Amistad* with a focus on the evidence and legal arguments put forward by both the prosecution and the defence.

2. You can use teaching activities from the American Studies Journal website:


3. Use the original documents related to the Amistad case, to develop student understanding of the structure, meaning and purpose of different types of legal documents:

   http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad/
Viewing Questions

1. What were the reactions in the Black community of Canvas Town to Aminata’s reading of the peace treaty? Did Lieutenant Waters’ attempt to use the peace treaty to save Clayborne from reenslavement work? What does Clayborne’s circumstance highlight about the experiences of some Black people who crossed British lines?

2. The Black soldiers who served for one year in the British Army were promised they’d be relocated to what place?

3. What two things did Captain John Clarkson ask Aminata to do? What was the military ledger to be called? How was Aminata going to be compensated? How long was Aminata employed to work on this project?

4. Berthilda repeats the words, “We’s family.” How does Berthilda try to keep her family together? Why does she insist on doing this? How does Sam help?

5. Describe the point of view of General George Washington and the Patriots at the end of the American Revolution.
6. Chekura says to Aminata, “You have become a djeli, recording our stories.” How does this role help Aminata realize her childhood dream?

7. During the hearing to determine Aminata’s ownership, Solomon Lindo states “It’s a matter of making peace with my past.” What did he mean by this statement? Who was affected by Lindo’s past actions? Along with freeing Aminata, how could Lindo right this wrong?

8. Why was Aminata unable to depart for Nova Scotia? Why does this lead to Aminata and Chekura being separated once again?
Activities/Extensions

Reflection: Understanding Media

Costumes play an important role in depicting the historical accuracy of a particular time in history. Write down everything you noticed about the costumes in the series. Are some costumes different from others? If so, in what ways? How do the costumes reflect the social status of the characters?

Activity: Exploring the Book of Negroes (Historical Document)

“The Book of Negroes did more than capture their names for posterity. In 1783, have your name registered in the document meant the promise of a better life.”

– Lawrence Hill, “Freedom Bound,” The Beaver

General Birch Certificates

Many Black Loyalists, like Emily and Aminata, were issued certificates of freedom signed by Brigadier General Samuel Birch. Black people, formerly enslaved or free, who could prove they had served in the British Army for at least one year were given permission to leave America.

Analyze this Certificate of Freedom for Cato Ramsay to emigrate to Nova Scotia:


1. Who was this document issued to?
2. When was this document produced?
3. Where was it produced?

4. What would this document allow the recipient to do?

5. Why was this document produced?

6. Who signed this document?

7. What three questions are raised in your mind after analyzing this document?

**The Book of Negroes**

To ensure that Black people without certificates of freedom did not leave the United States, the names of those boarding ships were recorded in the Book of Negroes. The original artifact is a 150-page military ledger. It lists the name of the ship on which evacuees will sail, where they are relocating to, passengers’ names, age, physical description, the name of person who claimed them as property (if any) and where they lived, the name of the person responsible for them in service, and relevant remarks.

Have students browse the digitized database of the Book of Negroes:


The transcription of the Book of Negroes can be used in conjunction with the Book of Negroes database to allow for an easier read for students (in the left sidebar, look for Documents and then locate Book of Negroes under Official Documents and Proclamations):


After spending some time examining the document, choose one person entered in the ledger and write a short, fictional biography about her or him.

1. Conducting **online research**, have students gather further information on this person’s place of birth and other details given in the Remarks section.

2. Using the structure of the short story as a framework — introduction, initiating action, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution — have students **create an outline** for their story that shows how their character came to be listed in The Book of Negroes.

3. **Write** the story!

**Making Text-to-Series Connections**

Episode 5 – Nova Scotia Free

By 1850 myths surrounding the operations of the clandestine organization [Underground Railroad] were commonplace. The unexpected and sudden disappearance of slaves from southern towns and plantations was invariably attributed to the presence of white men from outside the area; of free black subversives, whether home grown or imported; or of other slaves who hid runaways and helped get them to safety... When fugitives reached free territory, they seemed to disappear in an underground network of safe houses in rural and urban black communities and among white sympathizers. Yet given the significant numbers who were retaken, it is clear slaveholders and their supporters had developed a counternetwork of spies and informants, aided by local, state, and national officials, that helped to ferret out escapees.

– R.J.M Blackett
University of North Carolina

Summary

The now visibly pregnant and freed Aminata sets sail from New York to Shelburne, Nova Scotia. On arrival, she and other Black arrivals are met with resentment and racism. Violence from the community of white colonists already there includes lynching hungry Black people for stealing food. The Black Birchtown settlement outside of Shelburne, where Aminata lives, is marked by disease and hunger that claims the life of her newborn son. Following this devastating loss, Aminata is inspired by memories of her father and the support of Birchtown residents to resume challenging slavery through writing to British abolitionists. Captain John Clarkson responds by travelling to Nova Scotia and offering Birchtown residents resettlement in Sierra Leone on Africa’s west coast. Aminata and Chekura are reunited amidst increasing tensions in the area that culminate in white colonists burning Birchtown. Many of the unindentured Black residents who survive the Birchtown Riot set sail for Africa.

Context

People of African descent have been in what is now Canada since 1605, when a Black man named Mathieu Da Costa accompanied explorer Samuel de Champlain as a translator. He was a talented linguist and reputed to have been fluent in Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, a dialect
used by many Indigenous groups for trade, and possibly other languages (Johnston). The next recorded arrival of an individual of African descent, in 1628, would be a six-year-old enslaved boy by the name of Olivier Le Jeune. In 1629, France’s Louis XIV gave colonists in what is now Quebec permission to enslave African and Pawnee people. By 1701, he granted “full proprietorship” over enslaved people, allowing for their use beyond economic purpose at the discretion of the “owner,” moving closer to the chattel system that evolved in the American colonies. When the British defeated New France in 1760, the agreement struck stipulated that enslaved Africans and Pawnee would remain enslaved. It was not until 1793 that the gradual abolition of slavery was put in motion by Governor Simcoe’s 1793 Anti-Slave Trade Bill (Sadlier).

In this era of empire building, European powers, including the English and French, constructed worldviews that diminished the human stature of conquered, indentured and enslave peoples. While the British Empire and its colonies abolished human trade in advance of other European powers, the legacy of beliefs that created and sustained that empire were not so easily done away with. And so despite the fact that the North lands opened their arms to Black Loyalists, not all of its residents supported the decision. Their opinions about Black people had been shaped by many years during which slavery in the British Empire had become an almost mundane, economic undertaking. Suspicion of the Black residents of Shelburne and Birchtown, Nova Scotia, and subsequent violence toward them, were predictable.

The Black Loyalists were the first Black people to migrate to Nova Scotia. While they were freed through their participation on the side of the British during the American Revolution, others arrived as the property of white American Loyalists. This seeming hypocrisy sparked the abolition movement in Canada. In 1788, James Drummond MacGregor published Canada’s first anti-slavery material. He went beyond this to purchase enslaved persons and free them while criticizing those around him who continued to own other human beings (Dictionary of Canadian Biography).

While Canada has a mixed historical relationship with the enslavement of both indigenous and African people, it became a place of refuge for different waves of people fleeing enslavement. The Maroons were a group of Africans in Jamaica who fled and resisted enslavement. The word Maroon is thought to come from the Spanish, Simaron, which meant ape (Hamilton). In 1796, 543 Maroon freedom fighters who fought the British in Jamaica were sent to Halifax, Nova Scotia where they built the Citadel, Government House and other defense works throughout the city. Most settled Maroons, however, left Canada in 1800 for what they believed would be a better life in Sierra Leone.

When fugitive slave laws in America allowed enslavers to reclaim their “property” in all states, the northern non-slave holding states were no longer safe refuge for those who had escaped enslavement in the South. Abolitionists extended the Underground Railroad to Canada. This resulted in a number of Black settlements in southwestern Ontario, including the Elgin Settlement in North Buxton near Windsor. By the early 1900s, increasing migration away from hate-group activities that sprung up following slavery, prompted migration from the American Midwest to Canada’s Western provinces. These migrations and settlements in various parts of Canada from east to west were grounded in stories and dreams that suggested in this northern nation, it was possible to be Black and be treated as any other citizen was.
Key Terms

Indenture
A contract for labour in which the labourer gives up his or her freedom for a period of time specified by contract in exchange for the bare necessities of life. In the context of the series, indentureship was a close equivalent to being enslaved for a limited period of time.

Abolition
To abolish something is to do away with it. Those fighting for the abolition of slavery worked to bring the practice to an end.
Viewing Questions

1. Where was Aminata hoping to go in Nova Scotia? When she approaches the community of Shelburne, what are her observations? What does this forebode?

2. How is Aminata treated on arrival and by whom? How does she respond? What does this tell you about the differences between her and the men who approach her as she is leaving the dock?

3. What does Jason say about the relationship between freed Blacks and whites in Nova Scotia?

4. What role does Daddy Moses play in the Birchtown community?

5. Describe life in Birchtown for the Black community.

6. Labour is a major source of conflict between poor whites and Blacks in Shelburne. Might there have been a way to avoid this conflict? How? Who benefits from this conflict?

7. How does Aminata respond to the death of her son? How have her past experiences contributed to her response? Where does she draw strength from to overcome this experience?

8. What are the implications of Cummings Shakespeare’s indentureship in the print shop?
9. What is the irony behind Mrs. Witherspoon’s declaration that she “will have justice” following the death of her son?

10. Why does Chekura say, “It’s hard being a slave, but it’s hard to be free.”

11. What does Captain John Clarkson mean when he says that Sierra Leone is being developed for the “benefit of the empire”? What does this suggest about the Empire’s motives and relationship to the former enslaved people who they intend to settle there?
Activities/Extensions

Activity: The Book of Negroes – Creating Fiction from Fact (Part 2)

While both The Book of Negroes novel and television series are fiction, they are based on historical fact. Using the following online resources related to the African presence in the Americas, write a proposal for your own work of fiction:

1. The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database gives primary-source information on the voyages of slave ships from 1514 to 1866. This includes such information as the outcome of a voyage for slaves, slave resistance, the total numbers of men, women and children embarked, as well as the mortality rates for each voyage. Choose a voyage and construct a narrative that reflects the details provided in this database about that voyage.

   http://slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces

2. 1871 Census of Ontario: To find people of African descent, type “African” in the keyword search box. You will get over 4,000 results. Look at who they are (age, sex, etc.) and where they live in Ontario. This should give you ideas about the type of character you might develop around their circumstances.

   http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1871-on/Pages/1871-on.aspx

3. In 1856, Benjamin Drew’s collected narratives presented experiences of enslavement as told by African-American refugees settled in Canada. Browse these to find a few of interest to you.

   http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html

4. Have a look at the narratives of those who did not make it to Canada from the American Library of Congress’, Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project. Note differences in tone, candor, etc. with a view to understanding why this is so.

   http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html

5. There are many additional narratives available online at Project Gutenberg, including works such as 12 Years a Slave, on which the recent award-winning film of the same name is based.

   http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/search/?query=slave+narratives
**Extension: Underground Railroad (Virtual) Field Trip**

Have students visit the following sites to discover more about the Underground Railroad (UGRR) on both sides of the 49th parallel:


**Discussion Questions:**

1. What roles did people from different groups play in the UGRR (i.e. whites, Quakers, freed slaves, slaves, etc.)? Why?

2. What laws made the work of abolitionists and participants in the UGRR difficult? Explore these and discuss the purposes they served.

3. What role did morality play or not play in both the practice of slavery and the opposition to it, the abolition movement?

   - **Philosophy Extension:** Compare the morality of slavery from both Utilitarian Deontological perspectives.
IMPORTANT NOTE
Please preview episodes and select age-appropriate scenes before viewing the series with your students.

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
Suggested scenes from Episode 5, Nova Scotia Free:

- 6:15 - 8:40
- 9:48 - 10:35
- 19:00 - 21:00
- 21:45 - 22:50
- 35:25 - 39:18

Viewing Questions

1. Describe some of the hardships and challenges faced by the newly arrived Black Loyalists?

2. What strategies did the Black Loyalists use to try to survive?

3. What does Jason say about the relationship between free Blacks and whites in Nova Scotia?

4. What were the prevalent social attitudes towards the Black Loyalists held by white colonists as represented by Mrs. Maria Witherspoon and her son Matthew? Provide examples.

5. What factors contributed to the racial tensions leading up to the Shelburne Riots in July 1784?

6. What proposal did Captain John Clarkson present to the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia?
7. Why was Cummings Shakspeare not allowed to join the other Black Loyalists who decided to go to Sierra Leone?

8. How does Aminata continue her role as a keeper of stories in this episode through the work that Clarkson asks her to do?
Activities/Extensions

Reflection: Understanding Media

Read and examine the following warning that appears at the opening of *The Book of Negroes* episodes:

*The following program contains [nudity,] course language and violence. Viewer discretion is advised.*

After watching the series to this point, what is your opinion on this warning? If you were a member of the production team deciding on the appropriate warning to include at the opening of each episode, would you suggest the same wording or change it? Explain your reasoning. Refer to the Canadian Home Rating System for information on the rating system for films, videos and television in Canada:

http://mpa-canada.org/home-entertainment/

Activity: Indentured Black Loyalists

“The passage to Nova Scotia was therefore regarded not merely as an escape from slavery, but as an entry into a new world where the dignity and independence that came of equal citizenship were to be his.”


As a means of survival, some Black Loyalists like Cummings Shakespeare indentured themselves. Analyze this indenture document for a Black Loyalist by answering the questions below:


1. What is the name of the indentured individual?
2. Who did he indenture himself to?
3. When was this indenture agreement written?
4. What would the agreement require the indentured individual to do?
5. How long did this indenture agreement last?
6. William Stone agreed to give Harris “provisions.” What does that mean?
7. What do the words “his mark” mean?
8. Explain the difference between “enslavement” and “indenture.”
**Activity: Canada’s First Race Riot**

The Shelburne Race Riot began on July 26, 1784 and lasted for 10 days. Read and analyze these two accounts of the incident:

Transcribed diary entries by Reverend David George, a Black Loyalist (paragraphs 9 and 10): [http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/george_a_life.htm#riot](http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/george_a_life.htm#riot)


1. Which group attacked Black Loyalists in Shelburne? What fuelled their assault?
2. What efforts were made to restore peace and order?
3. What impact did the riot have on Black Loyalist families?

Create an illustration that depicts the moods and feelings of the Shelburne Riot. Share your rendering in a class Gallery Walk.

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**Making Text-to-Series Connections**


*Birchtown and the Black Loyalists* by Wanda Taylor, Nimbus Publishing, 2014

*If This is Freedom* by Gloria Ann Wesley, Roseway Publishing, 2013
Episode 6 – Home…

The Negro represents natural man in all his wild and untamed nature. If you want to treat and understand him rightly, you must abstract all elements of respect and morality and sensitivity – there is nothing remotely humanized in the Negro’s character.

– G.W.F. Hegel, 1830 (Pieterse)

The last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature that presented Africa in a very bad light and Africans in very lurid terms. The reason for this had to do with the need to justify the slave trade and slavery.

– Chinua Achebe

Summary

Aminata and other surviving Black Loyalists of Birchtown are transported to the newly created Freetown in Sierra Leone, Africa. The repatriated men and women work hard to build a town under the watchful eyes of a small band of troops employed by “the company.” While they have escaped enslavement and the hardships of freedom without full citizenship in the Americas, they are distressingly reacquainted with the Triangular Trade’s starting point as coffles of slaves are marched through their town to the ocean.

Aminata remains determined to return to Bayo, the village of her childhood. Her trek inland brings her face to face with more coffles and the threat that she will be re-enslaved. After successfully freeing a coffle of children, Chekura is killed, leaving Aminata alone to discover the true meaning of home. She travels to England to support the abolition movement by both writing and telling her story and is pivotal in the abolition of British slave trading.

Context

The descendants of the freed Black people who made their way to Sierra Leone from Canada and Britain currently make up about 2% of Sierra Leone’s culturally diverse population (CIA World Factbook). Like other African nations systematically disrupted by the Transatlantic Trade, subsequent colonization and strategic
decolonization, Sierra Leone has a troubled history socially, economically and politically. While Aminata and others like her, dreamed of returning home, what was left behind was being systematically looted of human and natural resources while being restructured under growing European colonial rule.

In his 1914 book on the topic, Norman Dwight Harris describes the colonization of Africa thus:

*During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the leading nations of the world engaged in a remarkable territorial expansion, -- an expansion with an imperialistic tendency. The age of exploration and discovery which produced a Columbus and a Cortez was reproduced again in an era which gave forth a Stanley and a King Leopold II. Africa was to be to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries what the Americas had been to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Between the years 1884 and 1900, France and Great Britain each acquired over 3,500,000 square miles of territory in the Dark Continent -- an amount equal to the whole of the United States including Alaska, -- while the Kaiser and the King of Belgium were marking out 1,000,000 and 900,000 square miles respectively for themselves.* (Harris 1)

As the “Age of Discovery” physically, culturally and politically decimated the many pre-contact nations of the Americas, the “Age of African Colonization” created a continent in crisis and a global diaspora of descendants who continue to call for an end to the many forms of racism that began with the trade of their enslaved ancestors. The above quote, written as it was in 1914, is a celebration of imperialism and colonization, however, rather than an indictment of either.

Much of the conflict in the 20th and 21st centuries in Africa are the aftermath of European imperial and colonial expansion during the time in which Aminata’s story is told.

The stereotypes that characterized Africans as less than human, justifying their enslavement, persist to the present. These continue to shape the lives and prospects of descendants scattered across the globe. The structural mechanisms put in place to control enslaved populations — including slave codes, Black codes, Jim Crow laws and slave patrols — cast shadows into the present in the form of racial profiling and the so-called “school-to-prison pipeline” that sees a disproportionate representations of Black youth in prisons on both sides of the 49th parallel. The casual separation of husbands from wives and fathers and mothers from children for the economic gain of some individuals and society at large, as happened during slavery, continues to be felt across the diaspora. Educational outcomes for descendants of the trade are so startlingly poor that they have been named the “achievement gap.” A more apt term that considers history’s unbroken threads and the structural barriers they have woven through time, would be the “opportunity gap,” centering the cause and onus for change on social structures and ideas rather than on the victims of centuries of human trafficking.

The narrative of the series provides the viewer with a modicum of closure as Aminata is reunited with the child lost to her as an infant. For millions across the diaspora born of the trade of African bodies, closure is both complex and elusive. Freedom from enslavement has not resulted in freedom from the widespread misconceptions about the intelligence and abilities of Black people reinforced by centuries of slavery.

Whether fiction or fact, the telling of stories such as Aminata’s may stir a collective conscience and hold the promise of change.
**Key Terms**

**Achievement Gap/Opportunity Gap:**
The achievement gap refers to persistent disparity in academic achievement between different groups of people; for example between white students and Black students, or between high and low income groups. “Achievement” suggests that the gap is produced at the level of the students themselves, while “opportunity” suggests that there are structural problems that result in unequal access to resources that support achievement. The term that is viewed as being more descriptive of the source of the disparity is “opportunity gap.”

**Colonialism:**
Control and/or governing of one country or group of people by another country without the consent or agreement of that group. The relationship is an unequal one that typically involves the exploitation of the “dependent” countries natural and human resources.

**Diaspora:**
Refers to a group of people who have been dispersed from their point of origin.

**Racial Profiling:**
The practice of using “race” to make generalizations about individuals typically based on long-standing stereotypes associated with the group to which the individual belongs.
**Viewing Questions**

1. How does Aminata visually verify that she has returned to the coast of her homeland?

2. Returnees are told that they cannot leave the confines of their compound in Freetown without the permission of the guards sent by “the company.” What does Chekura ask? Does this foreshadow things to come?

3. Who controls this new colony? What risks to the new settlers come with this?

4. What language does Aminata learn early in her settlement? For what purpose?

5. With the killing of Daddy Moses, what message is sent by the slave traffickers to the settlers? How did the soldiers from the company respond to their efforts to rescue the enslaved people in the coffle? Who did they restrain from acting? What does this suggest about their motives?

6. When Aminata asks the ship captain why he trades human beings, he says, “It’s all I know. I love Africa. Everybody’s doing it. The British, the French, the Americans. Even the bloody Africans have been mixed up in the trade, and for an eternity too.” He then looks at her and asks incredulously, “Was it really that bad for you?” What effect does Aminata’s response have on him? In what ways does it challenge what he says above?

7. Who are Quakers? What role do they play in the abolition movement? Why do they play it?
8. Why do they believe that Aminata’s voice is important to the abolition movement?

9. Why does Chekura attempt to help the slaves in the coffle? What haunts him enough to move him to risk his life for people he does not know?

10. What is the gift Aminata and Chekura exchange in the saying of each other’s’ names as he dies?

11. Aminata has spent her life working to return home. After all her life experience, culminating in the loss of Chekura, what realization does she have?

12. Do the abolitionists respect Aminata and recognize her as an equal? How do you know this?

13. Why are London Blacks forbidden to speak with Aminata? What does this suggest about the ability to self-determine by both freed and enslaved Black people?

14. The abolitionists do not want Aminata to write her own story. They wish to write it for her. At the same time, they are concerned that she not speak to the “Blacks of London” because it will decrease the credibility of her story. What does it say about the social positioning of these “Blacks of London” if it is acceptable to have white abolitionists present Aminata’s story, but not their stories that may be similar? Discuss.
15. Do you think Solomon Lindo is sincere in the efforts he makes over many years to right the wrong he committed against Aminata? What does he help viewers to realize about the possibilities for change? What actions does he take to correct the wrong he has done to Aminata?

16. Of all the forms of resistance enacted by Aminata, what actions were the most powerful in challenging the transport and enslavement of her people?
Activities/Extensions

**Activity: Reparations Debate**

Reparations are settlements offered to victims of social injustice. For example, in 1988, Canada paid reparations to Japanese Canadians who were interned during World War II. Many African-Canadian and African-American people feel that, due to the damage done by enslavement and subsequent human rights violations, some form of reparations should be paid to the descendants of this period of history.

Using the Newfoundland & Labrador Speech and Debate Union’s Teacher’s Guide to Introducing Debate in the Classroom, have students:

1. Conduct general research related to reparations based on their viewing experience and exercises associated with the *The Book of Negroes* series.
2. Develop a resolution regarding reparations.
3. Prepare arguments for each side of the debate and judging criteria.
4. Debate.
5. Evaluate the debate and learning associated with it.


**Simulation: World History of Racism in Minutes**

World History of Racism in Minutes is a simulation developed by Tim McCaskell during his tenure with the Toronto District School Board. Students participate in a series of tableaus that lead them toward an understanding of the development of racism through history and around the world. Full instructions can be accessed at the link below. This exercise can also be conducted prior to viewing the series to set the stage for it.


**Activity: Racial Profiling – Ferguson and the Price of Blackness**

Recent shootings of unarmed Black males in the United States have garnered attention internationally. Have students explore why this might be important to youth in other countries, including Canada.

1. Have students view the video The Price of Blackness, written by Cornell graduate student Lanre Akinsiku:
   [https://vimeo.com/104659669](https://vimeo.com/104659669)

2. The script is available here and can be used to follow along or read after viewing:
3. What is the general message of the film?

4. Why do these young university students feel guilty? What are they struggling with?

5. What needs to change for this not to be an issue for them? Be as specific as you can.

**Extension:**

You can also explore our News in Review series story on “Anger and Authority in the United States” available on Curio.ca. It comes with a teacher resource guide providing background information and lesson plans:


(Find out if your school or district subscribes to Curio.ca here: http://curio.ca/en/subscribers/)

**Extension: Who Are You and What Can You Do?**

After watching *The Book of Negroes* series and participating in some of the activities in this guide, ask students to identify what each of them can do to address current manifestations of social problems that began with the Transatlantic trade:

1. As individuals
2. Within their families
3. Within their school
4. Within their community

Create a class mural for posting in your school based on student responses to these questions.
IMPORTANT NOTE

Please preview episodes and select age-appropriate scenes before viewing the series with your students.

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
Suggested scenes from Episode 6, Home:
- Beginning - 5:50
- 25:10 - 30:34
- 30:35 - 34:20
- 38:30 - end

**Viewing Questions**

1. Why was the new colony established by British abolitionists called Freetown?

2. An “elder” is an older person who is valued for their wisdom and life experiences and who is influential in their community. Using examples from the series, describe how Daddy Moses fulfills the role of an elder of the Black Loyalist community.

   Find out more about Daddy Moses on the CBC Book of Negroes Companion Features – Portraits and Passages:


3. How does Aminata react to witnessing the ongoing slave trade in West Africa?

4. Aminata redefines her understanding of home as “what I would do with and for my people.” What do you think she meant by this?

5. When Aminata arrives in England in 1803, the British abolition movement is well underway. Describe the position of white British abolitionists on enslavement and the strategies they used to try to put an end to the African slave trade.
6. The story ends with Aminata reuniting with her daughter May, who was sold away from her. How do you think they both felt after being separated for 33 years?

7. Does Solomon Lindo finally make peace with his past? If so, how does he achieve this?

8. How does Aminata become a “new kind of djeli” in England?

**Activities/Extensions**

**Reflection: Understanding Media**

Watch these video clips of interviews with *Book of Negroes* author Lawrence Hill and Clement Virgo, the director of the CBC series:


What questions would you ask *Book of Negroes* author Lawrence Hill and director Clement Virgo about the process of adapting the book for television?
Activity: Should We Go or Should We Stay?

"Africa for the Africans, those at home and abroad."

– Marcus Garvey, Pan-Africanist, Speech at Madison Square Garden, March 16, 1924

"Africa! Africa! Africa! Africa my motherland!"

– Lailah Gifty Akita

British abolitionists encouraged Black Loyalists to relocate to Sierra Leone. This advertisement was published to persuade free Black people to join the exodus. Examine the image of the original document dated August 2, 1791 from the Nova Scotia Archives:


Then read and analyze the transcribed text (in the left sidebar, look for Documents and then locate Sierra Leone Ad under Official Documents and Proclamations):

http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm

Organize a community meeting of Black Loyalists to discuss the pros and cons of staying in Nova Scotia or relocating to Sierra Leone.

• Review and use the rules of community circles to govern the class activity.

• The class is divided into four groups to prepare arguments – for staying in Nova Scotia, against staying in Nova Scotia, for relocating to Sierra Leone, against relocating to Sierra Leone. Each group’s argument should include a statement outlining why their view is correct.

Hold the community meeting and have each group present.

When the community meeting is over, have students write a persuasive letter to persuade Black Loyalists to stay in Nova Scotia or go to Sierra Leone.
Making Text-to-Series Connections

*A Man Called Garvey: The Life and Times of the Great Leader Marcus Garvey* by Paloma Mohamed, Majority Press, 2004


References


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<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/AMALL:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28lhbcb+04902%29%29>.

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Moss, Charity. "Information is wanted." *Colored Tennessean* 14 October 1865.


