

"Stony the Road We Trod . . ." Institute 2019 Lesson Plan

Author of Lesson

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Group Concept

Resistance

Subject/Course

United States History, grades 11 - 12

Lesson Plan Title

Convict Leasing: White Southerners Act to Resist the end of Slavery



Black orphaned children and juvenile offenders could be brought to serve as laborers for white planters in many Southern states from 1865 until the 1940s

Source: <https://ejj.org/history-racial-injustice-convict-leasing>

(Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-D428-850)

Narrative

They are to be returned to a condition of serfdom. An era of second slavery.
- Adelbert Ames, Governor of Mississippi, 1875

After the Civil War, several Southern states instituted a system of racial oppression called Convict leasing. Under this system, state governments put in place laws that were primarily aimed at finding ways to arrest African Americans. Quick trials were held, which almost always led to a conviction. If the guilty prisoner was not able to pay a fine and court cost, the prisoners were “leased” to private railways, mines, plantations and other businesses. Prisoners in this system faced inhumane, dangerous and often deadly work conditions. However, they earned no pay, as the wages that they should have earned were given to the states. This system, which is sometimes referred to as “slavery by another name” lasted until the 1930s.

This lesson will introduce students to the system of convict leasing. Students will learn when, where, and why convict leasing was established. The students will also be able to discuss the short-term and long-term consequences of convict leasing on various aspects of Southern society. Finally, students will be able to write a well-reasoned argument discussing whether convict leasing should be considered an example of white resistance and/or slavery by another name.

Guiding Questions

- How did the status of African Americans change after the end of the Civil War?
- To what extent can the system of convict leasing be considered slavery by another name?
- To what extent is it reasonable to think of convict leasing as “resistance”?
- What is the enduring legacy of the convict leasing system?

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Explain the meaning of the term *resistance*
- Describe the system of convict leasing
- Discuss the ways that convict leasing might connect to later efforts by African Americans to gain full equality in American society.
- Discuss the legacy of convict leasing by connecting it to other actions carried out by whites to re-assert their control of Southern society after the end of Reconstruction.
- Write a well-reasoned argument discussing whether convict leasing should be considered “slavery by another name”

Class Periods

Three sixty minute periods.

These lessons will begin a unit about Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War.

College and Career Readiness Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12-1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Preparation

An Introduction to the Crime of Vagrancy

- Students will be asked to raise their hands if they have a job. Teacher will ask a student to “prove their employment.” This will continue until a student is located who cannot prove that they are employed.
- At that point the teacher will explain that white southerners often charged black men who could not prove that they were employed with the crime of vagrancy. The goal was to arrest and find guilty black men, who were used by whites as a source of forced labor. Those “criminals” were worked until they had paid-off their fines, or until they had died.

Lesson Activities

Day 1

THINK-PAIR-SHAR - Reading #1

- Students read and mark-up Reading #1
- Students discuss the reading with partners
- Whole-class discussion of the document

Define the term “Convict Leasing” as a class. Then, students should work with partners to answer the questions listed below. Follow with a whole-class discussion about the questions.

- Who instituted convict leasing? Why?
- What people and/or groups would benefit from convict leasing? How would they benefit?
- What people and/or groups would be harmed by convict leasing? How would they be harmed?

- What similarities are there between convict leasing and slavery? Differences?

Discussion - "Resistance"

- How many of you have heard the term "Resistance"? Where / in what context?
- What do you the term means?

Resistance Definition

- Define resistance as "the refusal to comply with something."

Discussion

- Should convict leasing be considered resistance? Explain why / why not
- Discuss with neighbor - then as a class

HOMEWORK

- Students will be assigned one of five different readings. Each reading will explore a specific case / example of convict leasing
- Students will be asked to read, mark-up, and write a one paragraph summary of the text

Day 2

Group discussion of readings

- Students work in five small groups (based on the text assigned for homework).
- Group members share their summaries of the text.
- Group members work together to create a short presentation to the class about its reading. The group should explain to the class the incident described in its reading, what people were involved, who/what benefited from the incident, and who/what was harmed by the incident. Finally, the group should describe how the incident relates to the system of convict leasing and the concept of resistance.

Each group presents its reading to the class

Small group discussion. Group members should record ideas and be prepared to share with the class.

- What impact did convict leasing have on the United States while the system was in place. What people/groups were impacted positively? What people/groups were negatively impacted? Explain.
- What lasting legacy, if any, does convict leasing have on the United States after it came to an end in the late 1930s?

Large group discussion (based on questions above)

Ticket-out-the-Door

- What is convict leasing
- Was the system of convict leasing a form of resistance? Explain why / why not?

Day 3

Video: Slavery by Another Name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNhuC6Z7IUQ>

Assessment

Students will provide written responses to the following questions

- Describe the system of convict leasing. When was it started, by whom, and for what purpose?
- Should convict leasing be considered a form of slavery by another name? Explain why/why not, providing reasoning and evidence to support your argument.
- Describe the lasting legacy of convict leasing on the United States. In answering this question, be sure to discuss the legacy of convict leasing on both African Americans and white Southerners.

Lesson Extensions

- Blackmon, Douglass A. *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Doubleday, 2008.
 - https://books.google.com/books/about/Slavery_by_Another_Name.html?id=2v-BYWrl9IC&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Jim Crow Laws as resistance
- Efforts by African Americans to resist Jim Crow
- Tuskegee Airmen
- Civil Rights Movement