



Harriet Jacobs

Research Project

OBJECTIVE: *To better understand the way slavery forced families apart and called for extraordinary sacrifice to achieve freedom.*

Goals and Standards

Social Studies Objectives: 4.03, 4.04

Social Studies Skill Goals: 1, 2, 3, 5

NCSS Standards: I, II, IV

Language Arts Goals 1.02, 1.03, 2.01, 3.02, 4.01, 4.03, 5.01, 5.02

Resources / Materials / Bibliography

■ Biography of Harriet Jacobs (access from Internet: <http://voices.cla.umn.edu/newsite/authors/JACOBSHarriet.htm>)

■ Picture (access from Internet: <http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu>) woman picking cotton

■ Excerpts from *Letters from a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, Harriet A., *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Edited with Introduction (pp. xiii-xxxiv) by Jean F.Yellin, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.)

■ Slave narratives (access from the Internet: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html>) written and audio

Procedures

■ Teacher will show class picture of former slave picking cotton (access from the UC-Davis History Project website). Have students brainstorm all the words they associate with the picture. Discuss with students their ideas and try to come to a consensus as to the kind of life a slave would experience. Students should address the reason the picture was taken and the possible uses for the photo.

■ Teacher will read Jacobs' biography to the students and explain her amazing passage to freedom.

■ Teacher will read selected passages from *Letters* to

acquaint students with the mind-set of slavery on the slave and master:

■ Teacher will have students listen to slave narratives and discuss the idea of slave narratives.

■ Teacher will explain the use of advertising in trying to recapture runaway slaves

Activities

■ Individually, students will take on the persona of a slave and write a journal entry detailing the feelings she or he has concerning her/his bondage.

■ Students will create their own ads/handbills for a runaway slave

■ Based on descriptions in the book, students should draw or make a model of the area where Jacobs lived while in hiding. Work with students to construct a grading rubric for this assignment or consult <http://www.teach-nology.com> for ready-to-use rubric.

■ The slave housing, hospital, and work areas at Somerset Plantation, a state historic site in Creswell, North Carolina, have been restored in recent years and offer a rare depiction of the daily lives and habits of enslaved people. (Most historic plantations that have been preserved as historic sites only bear witness to the lives of the slave owners.) If feasible, a field trip to Somerset could result in students' preparing a two to three page report on their findings and their reflections on the importance of this rare monument to early African-American life in North Carolina. If a field trip is not practical, students may choose to view the early segments of the film "Roots" and then read selectively from Dorothy Spruill Redford's book, *Somerset Homecoming*, which tells of her journey to spearhead the restoration of the slave quarters at the plantation. Students choosing the latter option may make an oral report to the class about Somerset and its role in preserving an early view of the African American Experience in North Carolina.