

Sample Lesson Plan Thinking Gender

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Course: **Thinking Gender** (undergraduate), 2h 35 min

Lesson topic: Slavery, Racism, Gender, and Resistance

1. Untold stories of slavery in Canada with and how slavery was shaped by understandings of race and gender
2. How the historical legacy of slavery impacts contemporary Canadian society.
3. How men and women of African descent resisted slavery and continue to resist categories of racialized gender.

Learning objectives: Students will be able to

1. Understand the history of slavery in Canada and how gender and race shaped it
2. Identify the ways that slaves rebelled against slavery in Canada
3. Understand the framing of the burning of Old Montreal and how it structures a particular understanding of Marie-Joseph Angélique
4. Understand how black slave women were exploited for not only their labour but their bodies. (i.e., white master owned their bodies and their children)
5. Critically discuss why slavery has been hidden in Canadian discourse
6. Become aware of how the legacy of slavery plays a role in contemporary Canadian society

Previously assigned readings

1. Afua Cooper, “The Secret of Slavery”
2. Wendy Brathwaite, “Black Women Rage”
3. Kim Anderson, “The Construction of a Negative Identity”

PART 1: Based on Cooper, “The Secret of Slavery”

Activity #1 Warmup: Becoming aware of current attitudes & feelings

5 min Whole group

Silent individual work at desks: When you think of Canada today, your home country, and you compare it to other countries, what adjectives come to mind that describe the character of Canada as you see it? Make a list of 5 to 10 adjectives or short phrases that you think best describe Canada. For example, do you think Canada is a just country? A violent country? A respected country? —Ask students to randomly call out their adjectives. “OK, we’ll come back to these descriptions of Canada in a few minutes.”

Activity #2: Becoming aware of previous knowledge or lack of it

5 min Whole group

1. How many of you knew that slavery existed in Canada before doing this week's readings?
2. How many learned about slavery in Canada in elementary or high school?
3. What did you know about slavery in Canada before doing today's reading?
4. If you belonged to a group of people that had been enslaved and no one knew about that history, how would that make you feel?
5. Is it important to know about the history of slavery in Canada? Why or why not?

Activity #3: Comparing Conditions under Slavery with Today

45 min

Purposes

1. To make students aware of conditions under slavery
2. Compare those conditions to today
3. Judge the relative accessibility of rights and freedoms for different groups in society today (even if they're guaranteed legally, some people have greater access to them)
4. Compare women's position in society today to other groups and to slavery

Steps

1. Preparation: Slide #5: What exactly is slavery?
2. Show chart on overhead projector.
3. In the left-hand column is a list of conditions under slavery. Can you think of a couple more to add to the list? Think about the conditions described in this week's readings.
4. Under Canadian law, was it legal to possess another human being? —Yes. [Put checkmark in box.] Was it legal to buy and sell human beings? —Yes.
5. Is there anything on this list that wasn't legal under slavery? —It might not matter, because slave owners had ultimate power over slaves.
6. How likely do think it was that slaves experienced all of these conditions? —Likely.
7. In the second column we have Canada today. Is it legal to own another person in Canada? —No. [Test one or two other items on the list to demonstrate how to use the 2nd column.]
8. In Canada human rights are protected by law. But there's a difference between passing a law and convincing all Canadians to respect the rights of all people. Some groups of people are especially vulnerable to loss of their human rights. Some of those groups are in the 3rd column. (The chart is too small to include all vulnerable groups.) To test this, let's focus on just one item from the 1st column: discrimination in hiring. Are there groups in column 3 that are still vulnerable to discrimination in hiring, even though we have laws against that? [Put checkmarks under all vulnerable groups.]
9. Divide class into groups of about 5 students. Allow 15–20 minutes for this part of the activity. Instructions:

- a. We're going to spend some more time with this chart to see how we can relate slavery to Canada today.
 - b. Hand out charts, 1 per student.
 - c. First, working as a group, see how many conditions of slavery you can add to the first column. Then analyze them by putting a checkmark in every box that applies in the "Under Slavery" column and "Vulnerable Groups Today." When you've finished your chart, discuss these questions with your group:
 - What patterns of checkmarks do you see on your chart?
 - What are the main forces that determine the pattern of checkmarks?
 - What does your chart tell you about power in society? What factors determine who has power and who doesn't?
 - What privileges go to people with power? Are those privileges in our legal code? Are they assumed in society? Are they acknowledged or covert?
10. Whole group discussion of chart: Choose 1 student from each group to answer 1 question from the above 4 questions about the patterns of checkmarks. Invite other responses. [15 min.]

PART 2: Black Women Rage, Wendy Brathwaite

20 minutes Whole group discussion

Vocabulary & unique phrases: Students will google these terms on their own to find the definitions and reflect on their meaning in the poem.

- Jah-Jah: Rastifarian term for God
- Queen Nzinga: 17th-century queen of Angola. Fought for freedom against Portuguese colonists.
- "We learn to run from home-grown licks" (ask students to interpret)
- arms akimbo
- 240 days
- the Motherland
- daughters of the cotton and cane

Questions

1. What images of slavery do you see in this poem?
2. "Black sounds rise with density of deep sound": What does this refer to? (Reference to slave music that gave rise to gospel, soul, rhythm and blues, jazz. Music and religion as salvation from hardships of slavery.)
3. How does this poem juxtapose negative and positive images of hope and suffering? Make a list of both types of images from the poem.
4. Is this poem ultimately negative or positive? Find words in the poem that support your opinion.
5. What does this poem say about the unique position of black women? How did they come to that position?

Wrap up 10 min.

1. Is slavery still a problem today? Why or why not?
2. Does slavery have any impact on your life? Why or why not?
3. Go back to their list of adjectives and phrases describing Canada. Does what you've learned about slavery in Canada change any of your previous feelings about Canada?