

Summary Description

This is a lesson that introduces the student to African American history.

Learning Objectives

To have the student learn a few key facts about the first Africans to arrive in the United States.

Approximate Time for Lesson

60 minutes

Suggested Maturity Level for Instruction

Student should be able to read simple words and perform simple addition and subtraction. Also, student should be able to sit still and engage in one-on-one conversation.

References:

"African Americans", Barbara C. Bigelow, Multicultural America -
<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/African-Americans.html>

"Africans in America - The Middle Passage", PBS - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p277.html>

"Top Ten African American Inventors", Scholastic -
<http://Teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/inventors/index.htm>

Materials Needed

1. Internet Access - Pull up the following:
 - a. World Map (go to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=world&Mode=d&SubMode=w>)
 - b. Picture of slaves in a ship (go to <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h310b.html>)
 - c. Picture of slaves walking in yokes (go to <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h321b.html>)
 - d. Picture of woman slave and man with whip (go to <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/pictures/southern-slave-town-550.jpg>)
 - e. Picture of a man with iron muzzle (go to <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h308b.html>)
2. Martin Luther King Jr. Coloring Worksheet
3. Crayons

Preparation

Make sure you have materials open, printed and/or available prior to beginning the lesson.

Script

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Teacher: Well well. Today, we will learn about another group of Americans called the African Americans.
2. Teacher: I wish this could be a happy story, but you're going to learn that the first Africans had a real tough time when they first reached the United States...and still do today. But you're also going to learn that there's so much hope for the African Americans and there are signs today that the hope is not lost.
3. Teacher: So are you ready to learn about the African Americans? [\[Get positive response from Student and begin lesson\]](#).

Lesson (50 minutes)

1. Teacher: Great. Now, the first Africans came to the United States from the continent of Africa [\[point to the continent of Africa on the World Map\]](#). Africa is the world's second largest continent. Now Africa is made up of many countries just like Europe is made up of a lot of countries. But I'm going to talk about all African Americans since they first came to the United States in one large group (and because of the way that they came here, it's hard to tell which country they came from in Africa). But you should know that this first group of African Americans came from the Northwest part of the continent [\[point to the Northwest curvy part of Africa on the World Map\]](#).
2. Teacher: Now, back then, many of the European countries were claiming parts of the world as their own and so this Northwest part of Africa was actually being run by European countries.
3. Teacher: Well, after Christopher Columbus came to America, the Europeans needed people to help farm the newly claimed land. Since many of the Africans already were farmers in Africa, the Europeans thought that the Africans would be best for the job. But the thing is, that the Europeans did not pay the Africans for working on the farms.
4. Teacher: In fact, the Europeans actually captured Africans living in Africa, then sold them to other people, just like say, someone finding a piece of gold and selling it to someone who wants it. And like I said, the new owners would then make the Africans work without pay for long hours doing the hardest work on the farm.
5. Teacher: And using Africans seemed to be the perfect solution to the farming problem in the United States because there just weren't enough people to do the farming work. Why were Africans a perfect solution for the Europeans? Because Africans were strong (only the strongest and healthiest were picked to do the work), they were cheap to buy, and there were plenty of them in Africa that could be brought over to the United States.
6. Teacher: But even though bringing over Africans to do the farm work seemed like a good solution to the Europeans, do you think it was a good thing for the Africans? I mean,

if you were thought to be strong enough, the Europeans would kidnap you from your family and your family would not even know what ever happened to you.

7. Teacher: Then, the Europeans would put you in a dungeon until a ship was ready for you to travel to the United States. The Europeans who kidnapped you would then show you to other Europeans to show off how good of a worker you would be. The Europeans would check your arms, legs, and teeth to make sure you are healthy. If someone wanted to buy you, he would make an agreement with the Europeans that kidnapped you and exchange you for money.
8. Teacher: Once you are bought, you would then be handcuffed with another African that you didn't even know. Both of you would then board a ship and be seated under the ship's deck with hundreds of other Africans who were also bought. There would not be enough room for you to stand because the ceiling would be too low. There would not be enough room for you to turn because the room would be too crowded. And the air would become terrible to breathe because of all the people packed in the room with no windows. And usually, the Europeans wouldn't even tell you where you are going or what they wanted you for.
9. Teacher: In fact, some of the Africans traveling in these ships thought that the Europeans were buying Africans so that the Europeans could eat them, which made the Africans even more afraid. Here's a picture of how crowded it was in one of these ships. The ships were so crowded that many got sick and died. [\[Show Student picture of slaves in a ship\]](#).
10. Teacher: And when the Africans got to the United States, they were put into yokes, which were like handcuffs but for your neck, and travelled to their owners. Here's a picture of Africans walking in yokes. [\[Show Student picture of slaves walking in yokes\]](#).
11. Teacher: Once at the home of the owner, the Africans were forced to work on the owners' farms or do whatever work that the owner told them to do. Here's a picture of an African woman forced to work while a man watches with a whip. [\[Show Student picture of woman slave and man with whip\]](#).
12. Teacher: If the Africans didn't do what they are supposed to do, then the owners would punish them. Some of the owners whipped the Africans and others used something called the iron muzzle to punish the Africans for eating too much or not listening to their owners. Here's a picture of an African in an iron muzzle. [\[Show Student picture of man with iron muzzle\]](#).
13. Teacher: Now, I'm not showing you these pictures to make fun of the Africans or anything like that. This kind of treatment was horrible...only animals would get this treatment. I'm showing you these pictures to show how bad it really was and that this really happened long ago in the United States.

14. Teacher: So, I ask you again, if you were African in those days, would you want to come to the United States? [\[Engage the Student in conversation but come to the point that Africans probably didn't want to come to the United States\]](#).
15. Teacher: But the Africans had no choice but to come here and work on the farms. Being forced to work for no money is what was happening to the Africans. And when this happens, it is called slavery. Sadly, the Africans became slaves of the Europeans, who were the new Americans, living in the United States.
16. Teacher: Well, as more and more Africans were brought to the United States to be slaves, the Europeans started to get a little worried because now, there were very many Africans in the country who could start to fight as a group for their freedom. And not only that, but some Americans also joined the fight to free the slaves.
17. Teacher: This led to many fights against the Americans and many people died. But eventually, the United States announced that all African Americans were free and that slavery was illegal. "Illegal" means against the law.
18. Teacher: Now this might seem like a happy ending. But just because African Americans were free didn't mean that other Americans liked them. Many Americans, in fact, still didn't like African Americans because of the color of their skin and so, it would be hard for an African American to find a job because many companies did not want to have African Americans working for them. African Americans were not allowed to eat at some restaurants or stay at hotels or even sit in the front of a bus (they had to sit in the back). And for some time, African Americans were not even allowed to vote on important decisions about the way Americans live.
19. Teacher: Yes. It was very tough for African Americans to become successful in the United States. But do you think that made the African Americans give up? No, the African Americans kept trying; kept working hard for their rights as people of this country. And now, African Americans have won back many of these rights and they are allowed to do things that other Americans do.
20. Teacher: But even today, there are still Americans out there that don't like African Americans and this is very sad. Why? Because these kind of feelings don't let Americans, as one team, play together to win. It's kind of like having someone on your soccer team and not liking them just because they have brown hair. I mean, does that make sense? [\[Engage the Student in conversation\]](#).
21. Teacher: And for us as Americans, it's especially important that we accept other Americans and not treat them unfairly just because of how they look. I mean, look around and you'll find that we are a country of many different people and all the lessons that I've told you so far, each of these different people gave some great things to the United States, which has made this country the best in the world, and we should never forget that.

22. Teacher: As for the African Americans, wow, they gave Americans so many things, but some good examples are peanut butter, corn bread, crab cakes, jambalaya (ham, sausage, chicken, or shrimp over rice), and gumbo (a soup with seafood, meat, and vegetables). African American Lewis Latimer created an important part of the light bulb that made the light turn on and light up. Garrett Morgan invented the traffic light. Dr. Patricia E. Bath invented an operating tool that helps blind people see. And do you know about that giant Super Soaker water gun that kids play with in the summer? That's right; it was invented by African American Lonnie G. Johnson.
23. Teacher: And who could ever forget the President of the United States, Barack Obama. President Obama is our 44th President of the United States and first African American to become President.
24. Teacher: OK - time for an activity. This is a picture of Martin Luther King Jr. [\[Give the handout to Student\]](#). He was one of the most important African Americans to help earn their rights as American people. One of the things that Martin Luther King Jr. told African Americans was to never fight when trying to earn your rights because fighting was bad for everyone, which is so true not only for African Americans but for all Americans. In fact, Martin Luther King Jr. is so important to the United States that we celebrate a holiday in January to honor Martin Luther King Jr.
25. Teacher: Spend the next few minutes coloring the Martin Luther King Jr. worksheet. Oh, just one more thing - Martin Luther King Jr. was famous for a speech we wrote called, "I Have a Dream." This speech was about his dream of a way of life when everyone in the United States would treat everyone fairly and with respect. Think about what your dream would be for the country, then write it down in the lines of the worksheet - ask me if you need any help with words you want to spell. You may begin. [\[Give the Student 10 minutes to complete the activity\]](#).
26. Teacher: Wow that's a great job you did! OK - time for review. Get in front of the class. [\[Have the Student stand in front of you \(consider inviting other members of the family also to set the stage\) and ask her the following:](#)
- a. [Why did the first Africans move to the United States? They were forced to move as slaves by the Europeans](#)
 - b. [What did the first Africans do once they got to the United States? They usually were forced to work on farms.](#)
 - c. [How were the African Americans treated by the other Americans after they were free? The first Africans were treated badly and so it was hard for them to find jobs or even go into restaurants to eat. Also, at that time, Africans could not even vote.](#)
 - d. [Who is the first African American President of the United States? Barack Obama](#)

- e. What do you think all Americans must do to make this country the best it can be? We must all work together as a team.

Teacher reviews any questions that the Student missed].

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Teacher: [Clapping] You did GREAT! Wonderful job! Are there any questions that you have regarding the African Americans? [Engage in conversation with the Student and resolve further questions by researching the Internet].