



LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM COALITION

John Brown: Solidarity & Resistance

Time: Two-Three Days
Grade Level: 9-12 Grades

Purpose (What will students learn from this lesson?):

Students will learn about John Brown's abolitionist work in the context of pre-civil war U.S. These lessons are situated in the LESMC comparative Ethnic Studies unit and focus on white solidarity and resistance in the struggle against slavery in the United States (US). Students will reflect upon John Brown's acts of defiance and consider whether they were acts of resistance and/or solidarity. Consider what might drive someone to give their life for the cause of racial justice.

Unit Enduring Understandings Alignment:

- Students will analyze and explain the legacy of John Brown.
- Students will discuss and present what actions John Brown took against the system of US slavery and consider what might have contributed to John Brown's decision act.
- Students will analyze, discuss, and share their viewpoint and perspective on whether John Brown's acts of resistance are justified.
- Students will critically analyze the systemic injustice of slavery in the United States and articulate the extent to which John's Browns actions were examples of solidarity and resistance.

Lesson Guiding Questions:

- Who was John Brown? What were John Brown's views slavery? What led John Brown to resist the system of slavery in the United States?
- Why did John Brown take the actions he did? Were his actions acts of solidarity? Were his actions examples of solidarity?

- Were John Brown's actions justified?

Essential Skills:

- Engage in Critical thinking
- Demonstrate Critical and Respectful Dialogue
- Practice Individual and Group Reading
- Writing a well-reasoned short paragraph expressing a personal point of view
- Work in collaboration with others to reach consensus on a controversial subject and creatively present the groups perspective persuasively.

Cultural Wealth (Yosso, p. 78):

- Resistance capital

Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment:

- Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native peoples and people of color.
- Critique empire and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, and cis-heteropatriarchy.
- Challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels.
- Connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels.

Standards Alignment:

COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION, STANDARD 3:

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

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: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.A: Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B: Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most

significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Materials:

<p>Youtube Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r38qD5mwsLE</p> <p>LESMC HANDOUT: (Force Copy) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TQTzO6YWTnPP9dlCjmUZv7gXBvPSscrI/copy</p>	<p>John Brown’s Holy War: American Experience article. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/brown/</p> <p>Google slides: (force copy) https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1o60x-y19fHFsAc4VZmQy-yYxjXm4ACxUfqfoIcTZktA/copy</p>
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Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students:

<p>Depending on the level of student comprehension, the teacher may need to front load or scaffold the following concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “actions of resistance” • Abolitionist • Underground Railroad 	<p>Depending on the level of student comprehension, the teacher may need to front load or scaffold the following quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “means can therefore justify the means” • “violence in a righteous cause was a light to purification”
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Critical Vocabulary (Pre-lesson):

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept	Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.
Abolitionists	A person who wants a particular practice or institution terminated. In this case, the abolition of enslavement.	
Underground Railroad	A network of people throughout the Americas engaged in the	

	process of helping slaves escape to freedom.	
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Critical Vocabulary (In lesson):

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept	Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.
Resistance	An act of dissent or defiance aimed at an oppressive force.	See handout
Solidarity	unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.	See handout

C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Slide 1: Title slide Slide 2: Land Acknowledgement [Create a land acknowledgement that is meaningful to the land you occupy and your positionality.]	3 minutes
Step 2	Slide 3: Ancestor Acknowledgement Bruce Klunder was an activist for housing and education justice. https://www.splcenter.org/rev-bruce-klunder	5 minutes
Step 3	Slide 4: John Brown Learning Objectives Teacher introduces Learning Objectives	
Step 4	Slide 5: Cultural Energizer (Learn, Mean, Questions) Teacher reads the short story from <i>Unsung Heroes by Howard Zinn</i> (or ask students to popcorn read). Ask students to complete the document.	
Step 5	Slide 6: Critical Terms Teacher should Explain the terms. Teachers disseminate worksheets and in small groups, ask students to quickly provide a pictorial example for each term or a short paragraph.	

	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qs-kKSot3ddkpAdSeQnrSGHwLVofpNOY/copy	
	After 15 minutes, teacher should ask for random responses and clarify any misunderstandings or misconceptions.	
Step 5	Quick write: Teachers may use the handout or a padlet for this assignment.	15 minutes

C2: Critical Concepts

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	<p>Short reading: Ask students to read the following biography from PBS on John Brown.</p> <p>Teachers engage students in a critical reading and ask students to complete a section on short reading in handout. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1550.html</p>	5-10 minutes
Step 2	<p>Slide 7 Who was John Brown?</p> <p>Teacher gives a short lecturette on John Brown as students listen.</p> <p>The teacher should let students know that John Brown’s father was adamantly anti-enslavement. Owen Brown raised his family to live in harmony with the neighboring native community and explicitly taught his son to treat all people with love (according to his religion). John Brown undoubtedly learned anti-racism at a young age.</p>	10 minutes
Step 3	<p>Slide 8 John’s ideas</p> <p>Teacher continues John Brown’s story and asks students to complete a section on John’s ideas in the handout. Give students ample time and resources to complete. Ask for random responses from students and teacher should clarify outstanding questions or misconceptions.</p> <p>Divide students into four groups, ask them to define highlighted terms and to provide an example for each:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do actions of resistance look like? Is it always 	15 – 20 minutes

	<p>violent? [is not always violent; can be taking a stand; BLM etc.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What does the clause “means can therefore justify the ends,” mean? 3. What is an abolitionist and the underground railroad? 4. What does the clause “violence in a righteous cause was a light to purification” mean? <p>Engage students in a whole group discussion focused on what was so bad about slavery that it lead John Brown into action?</p>	
Step 4	<p>Slide 9 Kansas Nebraska Act</p> <p>Teacher continues John Brown’s story and asks students to complete the section on Kansas Nebraska Act in the handout. Clarify concepts like “pervasiveness of slavery” (political and economic interest over people). Explain “balance” and what it meant to “to sway the vote”. Give students ample time and resources to complete. Ask for random responses from students and the teacher should clarify outstanding questions or misconceptions.</p>	15 minutes
Step 6	<p>Slide 10 John Brown’s Reaction [Tell the story]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did John Brown Do? - What were the results of his action? - What would have caused John Brown to engage in these actions? <p>-What were John Brown’s choices?</p> <p>Slide 11 Recruiting Convention</p> <p>Teacher continues the lecturette.</p>	5 minutes
Step 7	<p>Slide 12 John Brown Short video clip JOHN BROWN: Crazy Terrorist or American Hero? The Raid on Harpers Ferry https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r38qDSmwsLE</p> <p>Teacher should review the questions on the handout prior to showing the video clip, particular attention to the references revolutionary hero or midnight terrorist used by the narrator in the video.</p> <p>Have students watch the video and complete the video response section on the handout.</p>	20 minutes

Step 6	Students discuss their responses with a neighbor.	
	Teacher facilitates post viewing discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of John Brown’s actions? • What do you think drove John Brown? • Were his actions justified? • Is there something else he could have done? • What did the narrator mean “John Brown midnight terrorist or revolutionary hero?”. 	10 minutes
Step 7	Students may write a short summary of what they learned.	5 minutes

C3: Community Collaboration and/or Critical Cultural Production

STEP		TIME
Step 1	Slide 13: Community Collaboration Have students complete a poster. They might want to use canva to create their poster. Ask students to revisit the handout “Learn, Significance and Remaining Questions”. Prepare to share responses.	30 minutes
Step 2	Gallery Walk or Presentations Have students show their work and discuss.	10 minutes
Step 3	Teacher explains to students: In today’s society, John Brown’s actions are considered heroic, but these activities were to take place today, why would these actions be taboo? We all grow up in the system where we are often taught the dichotomized ideas of good vs. evil, hero vs. villain and sometimes these absolute terms are too simplistic. Abolitionists didn’t start off as abolitionists. It takes conscious work to become anti-racist activists, to decide to give your life up to liberate others. John Brown hated systemic oppression	15 minutes

	<p>and enslavement. How would you describe the depth of compassion and empathy that John Brown displayed for others?</p> <p>Ask students to construct and articulate an opinion: <i>Why do we think John Brown's actions are considered heroic, today?</i></p>	
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C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

Step 1	<p>Slide 15</p> <p>Teacher explains to students and leads a discussion on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Systemic oppression is not just symbolic; historically violent acts have been and continue to be leveled at those with marginalized identities. ● What is meant by the sentence: It is not just an intellectual endeavor to talk about the implications of violence. ● What are examples from history where others have stood up against injustice using arms or taken actions that might be considered violent?
Step 2	<p>Slide 16 Teacher lecturette, Student dialogue and Handout</p> <p>Teacher poses to students; Can we agree the dichotomy of hero vs. villain, bad vs. good, pure vs. evil is too simple an explanation for complex actions?</p> <p>Ask students to complete the handout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abolitionists did not start out as abolitionists; how did they get there? ● Many abolitionists of his time did not believe in actions of violent resistance; why? ● White abolitionists were not enslaved, yet they hated the enslavement of others; what motivated them? ● What does it take to swim against the cultural current of the time? ● When and why is a “villain” turned into a “hero”? What purposes does that serve?
Further Extension	<p>Slide 17 Conclusive Dialogue</p> <p>Teacher can provide some information about the current prison abolitionist movement and have students consider:</p>

What through lines can we draw between the abolitionism in the 1800s vs. prison abolition today.

Slide 17, 18, 19 Conclusive Dialogue

Teacher requests that students contextualize the hypervisible individual acts of violent resistance within a larger system of institutionalized/invisibilized quotidian/banal violence. In other words, we don't ask whether violence was "justified" or not.

- We ask what political analysis/ideology/positionality/lived experience led to this act of resistance?
- What political analysis do you have of our current world, is there anything that troubles you?
- What acts of resistance will it lead you to change the world?
- What would it take for you to "swim against the cultural current of our time"?

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