

Grades: 5th and 8th grades

Subjects: Social Studies, Common Core ELA-Literacy

Time Required: 1-2 50-60 minute class periods

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OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students use a number of primary sources to investigate how the Freedmen's Bureau accomplished its goals. Students discuss both the immediate effects and the ultimate goals of emancipation and how the Freedmen's Bureau contributed to the transition from slavery to freedom.

GOAL

Students will understand the ways in which the Freedmen's Bureau attempted to assist former slaves to make the transition from slavery to freedom in many facets of their lives.

OBJECTIVES

The learner will

- Understand the challenges faced by African Americans after emancipation.
- Describe the purposes for which the Freedmen's Bureau was originally established.
- Analyze primary sources to learn how the Bureau attempted to perform one of its functions.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What were the goals of the Freedmen's Bureau?
2. In what specific ways did the Bureau attempt to assist the lives of the freedmen?



[Emancipation / Th. Nast ; King & Baird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.](#) [1865]

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

5th Grade Social Studies:

5.20 Analyze the goals and accomplishments of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, Freedmen's Bureau, and Fisk University to help former slaves begin a new life.

5th grade Common Core: English/Language Arts

Reading: Informational Text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2 Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

(Continued on p. 2)

CURRICULUM STANDARDS (CONT.)

Speaking and Listening (cont.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

8th Grade Social Studies:

8.85 Explain the effects of the Freedmen's Bureau and the restrictions placed on the rights and opportunities of freedmen, including racial segregation and Jim Crow laws

8th grade Common Core: English/Language Arts

History/Social Studies

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

RESOURCES:

Introductory Sources

1. Emancipation / Th. Nast ; King & Baird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia. [1865] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004665360/>
2. [The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865](#)

Source Sets

Group #1

- The Misses Cooke's school room, Freedman's Bureau, Richmond, Va. / from a sketch by Jas. E. Taylor. [1866] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510871/>
- [Primary Source Handout #1 \(Education\)](#)

Group #2

- Plowing in South Carolina / from a sketch by Jas. E. Taylor. [1866 Oct. 20] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669782/>
- [Primary Source Handout #2 \(Abandoned Lands\)](#)

Group #3

- Glimpses at the Freedmen's Bureau. Issuing rations to the old and sick / from a sketch by our special artist, Jas. E. Taylor. [1866] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009633700/>
- [Primary Source Handout #3 \(Rations\)](#)

Group #4

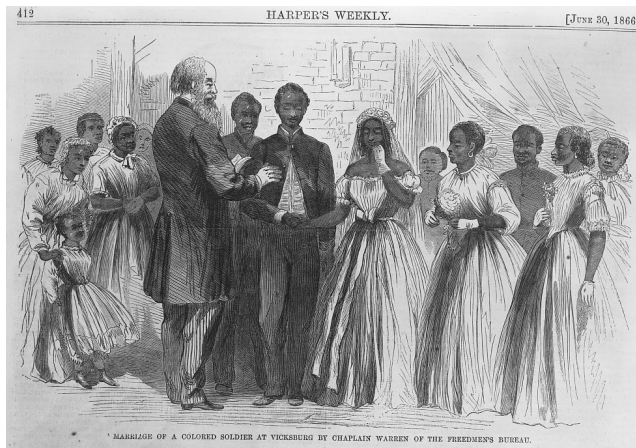
- Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmen's Bureau. [1866] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630217/>
- [Primary Source Handout #4 \(Marriage\)](#)

Group #5

- Labor Contract Between Abraham Bledsoe and Henry Bledsoe (freedman), commencing January 19, 1866. <http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/larger-image.html?i=/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/images/3-contract-bledsoe-l.jpg>
- [Primary Source Handout #5 \(Labor Contracts\)](#)

Group #6

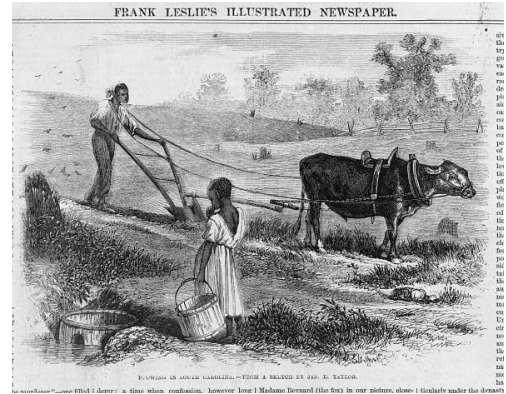
- Important Case in a Freedmen's Court {05/19/1866} [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/aaeo:@field%28DOCID+@band%28o1946\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/aaeo:@field%28DOCID+@band%28o1946))
- [Primary Source Handout #6 \(Freedmen's Courts\)](#)



[Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmen's Bureau](#) [1866]

MATERIALS

- [The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865](#)
- Primary Source Handouts #1-6
- [Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet](#)
- ["Emancipation During and After the Civil War"](#)
- ["Hope Within a Wilderness of Suffering: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom During the Civil War and Reconstruction in Tennessee"](#)



[Plowing in South Carolina / from a sketch by Jas. E. Taylor.](#) [1866 Oct. 20]

PROCEDURE

- Step 1:** PREPARATION—Prepare to display the Introductory Sources for the class. Print out copies of each of the source sets, and enough worksheets for each student. Plan how to divide students into six groups of 2 or 3 (4 or 5 if necessary in larger classes). Teachers may wish to read the background essays from the TPS-MTSU website before class: ["Emancipation During and After the Civil War"](#) and ["Hope Within a Wilderness of Suffering: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom During the Civil War and Reconstruction in Tennessee"](#).
- Step 2:** CONNECT—Lead a group discussion. Ask students to describe the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War on enslaved Americans. (They were freed.) Display Introductory Source #1 for the class: [Emancipation / Th. Nast ; King & Baird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.](#) [1865] Then ask students to imagine what would happen next in the life of a freed slave. Where would they go? What would they need or want? How would they live? What skills would they need to acquire? Do students think the right side of this image is an accurate portrayal of life after slavery? Ask the question: What would it take to transform the lives of African Americans from the life portrayed on the left side of this image to the life portrayed on the right?
- Step 4:** WONDER—Conduct a "brainstorming" session with the class. What do they know about the Freedmen's Bureau? When did it exist? What was its purpose? How is it remembered? Record answers on a board or overhead projection. Guide this session so students end with an understanding of the basic facts related to the Bureau.
- Step 5:** INVESTIGATE— Display Introductory Source #2 for the class: [The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865](#). Read through the Act as a class, section by section. If necessary, allow extra time to discuss the meanings of unfamiliar words and concepts. Record on the board what students think the meaning/purpose of each section of the Act was.
- Step 6:** CONSTRUCT— Explain that students will now be working in small groups with sets of primary sources. Each set is related to one aspect of the Bureau's work. The students' task is to use these sources to answer the questions on the Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet. Then they will use their sources to describe their aspect of the Bureau's work to their classmates. Divide the class into groups of two or three and give each group one of the source sets and enough worksheets for each student to have one. In a large class you may need to create groups of four or five and split each set between sub-groups. Allow students time to analyze their sources and fill out their worksheets. Circulate among groups to address questions of vocabulary, etc.

Note: For 5th graders, you may wish to break this time into two segments. Have groups begin with their text source, reading carefully and noting any unfamiliar words. Then come back together as a class to share and discuss the new vocabulary. Return to small groups to finish analyzing the text sources and images.

PROCEDURE (CONT.)

Step 8: EXPRESS— Have each group present their sources to the class.

Step 9: REFLECT—As a class, reflect on the final question from Step 2. Ask the students: Based on what they have learned today, did the Freedmen's Bureau meet all the needs of the former slaves? What do they think the Bureau should have done differently?

EVALUATION

Use the following rubric to evaluate student participation in group work and discussion.

90-100 Thoroughly answers all questions on the Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet and fully participates in group work and class discussions.

80-89 Answers 4 to 5 questions on the Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet and participates in group work and class discussions.

70-79 Answers 2 to 3 questions on the Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet and participates minimally or either in group work or class discussions.

69 and below Answers only 1 question or 2 or 3 questions minimally on the Freedmen's Bureau Worksheet and does not participate in group work or class discussions.

EXTENSIONS

Have students analyze and then compare and contrast the portrayal of the Freedmen's Bureau in the following three sources:

- ["The freedman's bureau"](#) [1868]
- [The Freedmen's Bureau / Drawn by A.R. Waud.](#) [1868]



[The Freedmen's Bureau / Drawn by A.R. Waud.](#) [1868]

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU WORKSHEET

NAME _____

1. Examine your two sources. What aspect of the freedmen's lives are these sources related to?

2. Read your excerpt from a Freedmen's Bureau document. What does it authorize the Freedmen's Bureau to do? Does it place any limitations on the Bureau's intervention?

3. Describe your second source. What type of source is it? Can you tell who produced it? How does it portray the Freedmen's Bureau? _____

4. How are your two sources related? _____

5. Which of the freedmen's needs are being addressed in these sources? Based on these sources, do you think the Bureau's intervention in this area would have been effective?

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU ACT OF 1865

The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865

March 3, 1865

CHAP. XC.—An Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby established in the War Department, to continue during the present war of rebellion, and for one year thereafter, a bureau of refugees, freedmen, and abandoned lands, to which shall be committed, as hereinafter provided, the supervision and management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced in the operations of the army, under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the head of the bureau and approved by the President. . . .

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct. . . .

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That the commissioner, under the direction of the President, shall have authority to set apart, for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale, or otherwise, and to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at an annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land, as it was appraised by the state authorities in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation, and in case no such appraisal can be found, then the rental shall be based upon the estimated value of the land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner as the commissioner may by regulation prescribe. At the end of said term, or at any time during said term, the occupants of any parcels so assigned may purchase the land and receive such title thereto as the United States can convey, upon paying therefor the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid.

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That all acts and parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

APPROVED, March 3, 1865.

U.S., Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 13 (Boston, 1866), pp. 507-9.

Excerpted from: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/fbact.htm>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #1
EDUCATION

South Carolina, Georgia, And Florida, Beaufort, S. C, June 26, 1865.

The following circular from headquarters of Freedmen's Bureau is republished for the information of all general and assistant superintendents, and others interested, in the States of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida:

[Circular No. 2.]

War Department, Bureau Refugees, Freedmen, And Abandoned Lands, Washington, D. C, May 19, 1865. By appointment of the President, I assume charge of the "Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands." . . .

II. But it is not the intention of government that this bureau shall supersede the various benevolent organizations in the work of administering relief. This must still be afforded by the benevolence of the people through their voluntary societies, no governmental appropriations having been made for this purpose. . . .

IV. The educational and moral condition of these people will not be forgotten. The utmost facility will be afforded to benevolent and religious organizations and State authorities in the maintenance of good schools, (for refugees and freedmen,) until a system of free schools can be supported by the reorganized local governments. Meanwhile, whenever schools are broken up by any authorized agent of the government, it is requested that the fact and attendant circumstance be reported to this bureau. . . .

Excerpted from <http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsongeneralloohowardcircularno2.html>

An Act to continue in force and to amend "An Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees," July 16, 1866

Statutes of the United States

Sec. 13. *And be it further enacted*, That the commissioner of this bureau shall at all times co-operate with private benevolent associations of citizens in aid of freedmen, and with agents and teachers, duly accredited and appointed by them, and shall hire or provide by lease buildings for purposes of education whenever such association shall, without cost to the government, provide suitable teachers and means of instruction and he shall furnish such protection as may be required for the safe conduct of such schools.

Excerpted from <http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsonanacttocontinueinforcethebureaufortherelieffreedmenandrefugees1866.html>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #2
ABANDONED LANDS

War Department
Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.
Washington July 28, 1865.

Circular
No. 13

I. All confiscated and abandoned land, and other confiscated and abandoned property, that now and or that may hereafter come under the control of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen & Abandoned Lands, . . . are and shall be set apart for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen and assigned to them as provided in Sect 4. of the act establishing the Bureau viz: "to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at an annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land, as it was appraised by the state authorities in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation At the end of said term, or at any time during said term, the occupants of any parcels so assigned may purchase the land and receive such title thereto as the United States can convey, upon paying therefor the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid." . . .

Excerpted from:

National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 105, Entry 24, No. 139 Asst. Adjutant General Circulars 1865-1869, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, pp. 14-15. (Transcribed from the original by John Soos, August, 2003)

War Department
Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.
Washington, D.C., Sept. 12. 1865.

Circular
No. 15.

I. Circular No. 13, of July 28, 1865, from this Bureau, and all portions of Circulars from this Bureau conflicting with the provisions of this Circular, are hereby rescinded. . . .

VII. Abandoned lands held by this Bureau, may be restored to owners pardoned by the President, by the Assistant Commissioners, to whom applications for such restoration should be forwarded, so far as practicable through the Superintendents of the Districts in which the lands are situated. . . .

Transcribed and excerpted from:

<http://lowcountrydigital.library.cofc.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/HFF&CISOPTR=1024>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #3
RATIONS

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands,
Office Act. Ass't commissioner, State of Georgia.

Augusta, GA., oct. 3, 1865.

Circular No. 2.

To prevent starvation and death among the freed people during the rapidly approaching winter, officers and agents of this Bureau will make immediate and vigorous efforts to provide all freed people, who may be out of employment, with opportunities for labor where fair compensation and kind treatment will be secured to them. This is the only practicable and comprehensive plan of providing for their necessities, and to this all homes, asylums, hospitals, or other modes of furnishing relief, will be regarded as subsidiary and for temporary use only. . . .

4th. Rations will not be issued, or other aid given, to able-bodied refugees or freed people who are offered, or can find, opportunities to labor for their own support, and who neglect or refuse to do it. Only such persons of either class as have sufficient means, or who are so permanently employed as to make it probable that they will be able to provide for their own wants through the coming winter, will be allowed to remain in or about cities and towns, but must be compelled, if necessary, to go to the country and accept places of labor found by themselves or for them, by officer or agents of the Bureau. . . .

Transcribed and excerpted from: <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ead/id/128061/rec/6>
<http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ead/id/127809/rec/7>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #4
MARRIAGE

Headquarters, Assistant Commissioner
Bureau Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands,
South Carolina, Georgia and Florida,
Beaufort, S.C., Aug. 11, 1865

General Orders,
No. 8.

Marriage Rules.

To correct as far as possible one of the most cruel wrongs inflicted by slavery, and also to aid the freedmen in properly appreciating and religiously observing the sacred obligations of the marriage state, the following rules are published for the information and guidance of all connected with this Bureau throughout the States of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida:

Section I.

Parties Eligible to Marriage. 1.—All male persons, having never been married, of the age of twenty-one, and all females, having never been married, of the age of eighteen, shall be deemed eligible to marriage.

2.—All married persons who shall furnish satisfactory evidence of either the marriage or divorce of all former companions, according to the usages of slavery, or of their decease, will be eligible to marriage again.

3.—All married persons, producing satisfactory evidence of having been separated from their companions by slavery for a period of three years, and that they have no evidence that they are alive; or, if alive, that they will ever, probably, be restored to them, may be allowed to marry again.

Section II.

Parties authorized to grant Permits of Marriages. 1. —All religious societies or churches of the freedmen or of other persons, whose organizations are recognized by their respective denominations, are authorized to grant permits for marriage, provided:

First. That the parties are of lawful age, and that neither have never been married.

Second. That if either or both have married, that such party has complied with the conditions of Sec. I., Rules 2 and 3.

2.—Any society or church, having an ordained pastor, may delegate to him its power to examine applicants and grant permits for marriage. Such power, however, may be revoked at any time.

3.—Civil officers may give permits for marriages, if the laws of the State provide for the same, and such laws are recognized as in force by the General Government. . . .

Transcribed and excerpted from: <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=301772&imageID=485559>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #5
LABOR CONTRACTS

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands,
Office Act. Ass't Commissioner, State of Georgia.

Augusta, GA., Oct. 3, 1865.

Circular No. 2.

6th. Contracts for this year, however made, verbal or otherwise, will not be interfered with, except to compel, if necessary, both parties to comply in good faith with their agreements, and to settle disputes when they may arise. Contracts for next year will be made in writing. The form of contract usually adopted, reads as follow:

"Know all men by these presents, that ----- of the county of -----, State of -----, held and firmly bound to the United States of America, in the sum of ----- dollars, for the payment of which ----- bind -----heirs, executors, administrator, firmly by these presents in this contract: That ----- to furnish to the persons whose names are subjoined, (freed laborers), quarters, fuel, substantial and healthy rations, all medical attendance and supplies in case of sickness, and the amount set opposite their respective names per month during the continuation of the contract; the laborers to be paid in full before the final disposal of the crop which is to be raised by them on -----plantation, in the county of -----, State of -----.

No. Names. Age. Rate of Pay per Month (Dolls, Cts.)

This contract is to commence with this date and close with the year.

Given in duplicate at - ---- this ----- day of 186 .

Witness

Superintendent of District

Registered at ----- 186 .

Transcribed and excerpted from: <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ead/id/128061/rec/6>
<http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ead/id/127809/rec/7>

PRIMARY SOURCE HANDOUT #6
FREEDMEN'S COURTS

An Act to continue in force and to amend "An Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees,"
July 16, 1866

Sec. 14. *And be it further enacted*, That in every State or district where the ordinary course of judicial proceedings has been interrupted by the rebellions, and until the same shall be fully restored, . . . the right to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to have full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings concerning personal liberty, personal security, and the acquisition, enjoyment, and disposition of estate, real and personal, including the constitutional right to bear arms, shall be secured to and enjoyed by all the citizens of such State or district without respect to race or color, or previous condition of slavery. And whenever in either of said States or districts the ordinary course of judicial proceedings has been interrupted by the rebellion, . . . the President shall, through the commissioner and the officers of the bureau, . . . extend military protection and have military jurisdiction over all cases and questions concerning the free enjoyment of such immunities and rights, and no penalty or punishment for any violation of law shall be imposed or permitted because of race or color, or previous condition of slavery, other or greater than the penalty or punishment to which white persons may be liable by law for the like offence. . . .

Excerpted from: [http://www.drbronsontours.com/
bronsonanacttocontinueinforcethebureauforthereliefoffreedmenandrefugees1866.html](http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsonanacttocontinueinforcethebureauforthereliefoffreedmenandrefugees1866.html)