

#TeachResistance

Ad removed. [Details](#)

Resources, lesson plans, and community to empower elementary students to be agents of change.

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton, by Don Tate

Abstract:

In this lesson students will listen to *Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton* (<http://dontate.com/book/poet-the-remarkable-story-of-george-moses-horton/>) and write their own poems about freedom. This story is about George Moses Horton, an enslaved African who taught himself to read, and eventually became a renowned poet. Students will learn about Horton's life, most of which he spent enslaved in North Carolina until the end of the Civil War. Students will also learn that there were many forms of resistance by enslaved Africans including efforts to learn and teach others to read and write.

Common Core Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.2

Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Social Justice/Anti-Bias Standard:

(From the Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework (<http://www.tolerance.org/social-justice-standards>))

Justice 15

I know about the actions of people and groups who have worked throughout history to bring more justice and fairness to the world.

Action 20

I will work with my friends and family to make our school and community fair for everyone, and we will work hard and cooperate in order to achieve our goals.

Advertisement

Materials:

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton (<http://dontate.com/book/poet-the-remarkable-story-of-george-moses-horton/>), excerpt from “On Liberty and Slavery” (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52307>).

Vocabulary:

enslaved, inspirational, determined, swayed, toiled

Learning Target:

I can write a poem that describes freedom using sensory words (see/hear/sound...)

Hook:

What is your first memory of reading by yourself? What did it feel like when you first read independently?

Direct Teach:

Today we're going to learn about a man named George Moses Horton. He lived in a time of terrible injustice when millions of Africans were enslaved in the United States, but many enslaved Africans found ways to fight back against the injustice of enslavement. As we listen to the story, think about how George decided to resist injustice in his life.

Read Aloud *Poet*. As you read, you might ask:

- Why do you think reading is important to George?
- What word would you use to describe George? Why? What evidence can you give from the story?
- What do you think it means that the verses "kept him strong"?
- What do you think the author means when he writes, "Words loosened the chains of bondage long before his last day as a slave,"?

After reading, you might ask:

- What are some ways the author shows us the injustice of slavery? What are some ways enslaved Africans resisted enslavement in the story?
- What would you do if someone told you that it was illegal for you to read or write?
- What are some things you think people don't want you to learn about?

Guided Practice:

After reading, share the excerpt below from Horton's poem, "[On Liberty and Slavery](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52307)" (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52307>). Discuss the stanza. Ask students what they notice. Clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar words.

Advertisement

Point out the way Horton describes Liberty: What does Liberty sound like to Horton? What does it feel like? How does Liberty move?

Come Liberty, thou cheerful sound,
 Roll through my ravished ears!
 Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,
 And drive away my fears.

If students are unable to paraphrase the poem, you may do so, and draw their attention to the highlighted key words.

As a class brainstorm sensory words to describe liberty. Start by focusing on feelings, for example happiness. Then connect the feelings to sound and movement. What sound would happiness make? Or what sounds do you think of when you think of a happy time in your life?

Independent Practice:

Ask students to write their own poem about Freedom. When they write, ask them to envision what Freedom would look like, sound like, and feel like in a world where ALL people were free.

Anticipated misconceptions or questions (If kids say...):

"I wouldn't care if I didn't have to read" You could say, "How do you think you'd feel if you didn't know how to read? Would that change how you feel?"

"Martin Luther King, Jr. ended slavery right?" You might create quick a timeline with students to show the distinct eras of slavery in the U.S. and of Jim Crow.

"After MLK everyone is free now!" Depending on your community choose the most appropriate entry point (i.e. Is your school population homogenous? Is there a local or national news story your students are aware of?) but bring students attention to examples of racial inequity that persist today, for example, "MLK and all the fighters of the civil rights movement fought really hard for justice, and changed the world for the better in lots of ways. Can you think of any examples of racism that you see around us?"

"I don't know what to write!" You could say, "Can you think of anyone in our world who doesn't have freedom? How would it feel different if they did?"

Ideas for Modifications/Differentiation

Advertisement

- Provide a graphic organizer to help students brainstorm sensory descriptive words for Freedom
- Give students sentence stems for their poems, for example:
 - Freedom sounds like... and also

- Freedom moves like... or a
- It makes me feel like...

Share/Closing:

In pairs or as a whole class have students share their poems.

Activist Extension:

- Learn about the diversity gap in children's literature (<http://www.zettaelliott.com/its-time-to-tell-the-truth/>) today. Do a survey of your classroom or home library. Is there a diverse representation of racial identities? If not, brainstorm ways to make a change. Join the #StepUpScholastic campaign, demanding Scholastic diversify their monthly book catalogs.
- Create an informational campaign to teach people in your community about illiteracy in the United States or your local community. Make a plan to fight for literacy efforts (Letter writing to support more funding for libraries? Organize a fundraiser or book drive to support a literacy nonprofit in your community? Here are two lists from GoodNet (<http://www.goodnet.org/articles/463>) and Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/11/book-charities-that-help-kids_n_6817484.html) if you're looking for a organization to support.)
- Brainstorm topics or skills that aren't taught at school that students wish they could learn.
- Organize a way for students to learn them (For example they could write a letter to the principal or school board asking for changes to the curriculum, research experts to invite to the classroom to teach them, or go to the library to do their own research)
- Research banned books in your school, district or state. Why are these books banned? Organize a campaign to remove these books from the banned books list.

Author page: <http://dontate.com/> (<http://dontate.com/>).

Advertisement

Website Powered by WordPress.com.

Advertisement

Ad removed. [Details](#)