



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2014 Volume I: Understanding History and Society through Images, 1776-1914

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## **American Genre Painting: Visual Representations of Slavery and Emancipation, 1850-1870**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 14.01.02, published September 2014

by Tara Ann Carter

This unit seeks to investigate the lives of African-Americans directly before and after the Civil War. Specifically, the genre paintings selected span the decades of 1850 to 1870, thereby representing a tumultuous period of American History, from which students can glean a strong visual understanding of what life looked like for black people, while simultaneously unpacking the idealized historical perspectives on antebellum and postbellum perceptions of slave and freedman life. By looking at a selection of twenty-five images created between the specified years, students can also find a thematic and visual vocabulary for understanding the structures of power in the United States. This curriculum unit is a project of fostering narrative visualization throughout the history of African-Americans. This unit will apply new techniques and strategies to integrate these images into the classroom in an authentic way, such as close analysis of artwork and connections between visual representation and written historical texts.

(Developed for African American History, grade 9; recommended for African American History and American History, grades 9-12)

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