



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2023 Volume I: Histories of Art, Race and Empire: 1492-1865

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## Using art to interpret *The Mary Prince* - Narrative of a Slave Woman

Guide for Curriculum Unit 23.01.03, published September 2023  
by JD DeReu

This unit will bring together art, race, literature, and history in the minds of my students. The unit will start with students analyzing art as it relates to the ugly history of art meant to project racial hierarchies in the early 20th century in order to introduce concepts of art interpretation in a way the students can relate to on a personal level. From there, the students will read *The History of Mary Prince* and study works of art that depict aspects of slavery and abolition that relate to events in the story as they read. The student will improve their reading skills of visualization, artistic analysis, writing, and attain a greater understanding of the history of America, England, the Caribbean in the 18th and 19th centuries. The students will also see the enslaved people as individuals worthy of empathy, develop a respect for their struggle, and recognize the contribution they made to the trans-Atlantic world. The students will feel a sense of catharsis as Mary leaves her slave owners for the last time at the end of the narrative. These skills will be synthesized in a final product, an argumentative essay in which the students will be given a variety of works of art and then write an essay arguing that one of those pieces should be the cover of the book.

(Developed for English 4, grade 12; recommended for English 3, grade 11, and World History, grade 10)

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