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

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

Curriculum Unit 23.01.03, published September 2023
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“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.” Marcus Garvey

“When art has changed, it’s because the world was changing.” Corita Kent

Introduction-

I am a teacher in Richmond, Virginia. One of my goals is to design this unit so that it can be applied to classrooms throughout the United States. I will be teaching this unit at Franklin Military Academy, a 6th-12th grade school which is part of the Richmond Public School system. The population of this school is approximately 300 students of which an estimated 78% are African-American, 16% are Hispanic, 4% are White and 2% are either multiracial or Asian. Students are bussed from the entirety of Richmond to attend the school which is located in the city’s oldest neighborhood. Our student population represents a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds from the middle class to public housing residents as well as those students who live with extended family members. I have found that visual arts can be successfully employed to increase reading comprehension and stimulate writing for students of all backgrounds and academic levels. The ability to interpret art in terms of historical context, visual style, and connection to the viewer will be a crucial component to the reading of *The History of Mary Prince, A Slave Narrative*, a short volume of ferocious intensity. First published in 1831 in England, it is the telling of Mary Prince’s life story, from being born into slavery to her eventual and very fortuitous emancipation in England when she was in her 40s.¹

This narrative not only voices a perspective that is almost never heard, but also affords excellent opportunities for the study of gender and ethics as well. *The History of Mary Prince, A Slave Narrative* is a work of nonfiction. Ms. Prince was not a professional writer. Students at times may struggle to visualize her experience. The incorporation of visual art from that time period that portrays the experiences of enslaved Africans in the same situation can help increase the students’ skills of visualization which is associated with greater reading comprehension and an awareness of this important part of human history.

Rationale-

The History of Mary Prince is a part of the Richmond Public Schools 12th grade English curriculum. Richmond was one of the largest slave ports in North America. Both Nat Turner's and John Brown's slave rebellions, and well as many bloody Civil War battles, occurred in this area. Students have thus been exposed to the history of the slave trade on a local level often at the expense of understanding slavery and the abolitionist movement in a global context. I feel that students also consider slavery as an abstract concept. They fail grasp the severity of the inhumane and immoral nature of the institution of trans-Atlantic slavery. The reading of *The History of Mary Prince* will hopefully give the students a more personalized connection to the horrors of slavery and instill in them an understanding of the importance of learning about this history. It will be a reminder about the power of kindness and the need to be vigilant in the face of social division and inequality. The inclusion of works of art from this period that capture the historical situation of *The History of Mary Prince* will be important to help students hone their visualization skills, expand their academic horizons (our school does not offer Advanced Placement Art History), and engage in higher level writing. It will also increase student enjoyment both in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. Richmond is home to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) which houses a world-class collection of art. I want this unit to empower my students to go to this or any museum knowing they are entitled to engage with, analyze, and thusly enjoy the art on display without feeling self-conscious.

Including Diverse Voices

The educational systems in America have a long history of not sufficiently including diverse perspectives in the curriculum. *The History of Mary Prince* is the narrative of woman who was enslaved for the majority of her life. It is the first narrative of a Black woman to be published in England. Her narrative was told to and recorded by a woman who was a member of the Anti-Slavery Society in England. It was used by abolitionist groups in England as a tool to sway public opinion against slavery and was monumental as a voice of a woman of African descent in the world dominated by European men.

A major component to be incorporated in this unit is the use of art work from the 18th and 19th centuries, amplifying the central voice, that of a resilient woman of African descent. It includes works of art that are created by or depict men and women of African descent. This further provides a variety of perspectives that reflect the wide range of contributions they have made to our history. I will be using this as tool to generate classroom discussion relevant to the narrative told by Mary Prince. Many of our students consider art, especially works of art that hang in a museum, to be something that exists exclusively for people in higher income tax brackets. This attitude is not unjustified when one considers the Eurocentric works of art that have traditionally dominated art education and pop culture. Exposing students to artwork that represents the rich history, cultural legacy, and contributions made by people of color and other marginalized groups will provide them the opportunity to understand that there is a place for them in the artworld. It will also give them the confidence to analyse art and to contemplate what the artist is trying to communicate to the viewer. This mirrors what we want our students to do when the read literature and poetry. We want students to have confidence when they read in order to interact with the text, to make conjectures, to consider the historical context, and to make judgements about what they like and don't like.

Art from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Learning increases when people are able to make a connection to something on a personal level. There is an opportunity to connect teaching *The History of Mary Prince* to events that occurred and were witnessed in real time by many of the students in Richmond Public Schools. There was a powerful confluence of art, race, and history which recently occurred on the streets of Richmond. In September of 2021, a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee was removed from the historic Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. It was erected in 1890 and was long considered an artistic mainstay of Richmond promoted by the city as a tourist destination. ² Its removal, and the removal of other statues of “heroes” of the Confederacy was accelerated by the general social upheaval that swept parts of America in the wake of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney stated, “Richmond is no longer the capital of the Confederacy. We are a diverse, open and welcoming city, and our symbols need to reflect that reality.”³

As a powerful event that occurred in the city where my students live, in recent memory, it is something many of them will retain as flashbulb memories for their lifetimes. This presents an opportunity to use these events which are so clearly embedded in the minds of many of the young people of Richmond. It will be a foundation to understanding and analyzing the artwork of the trans-Atlantic world to help to create a greater comprehension of *The History of Mary Prince*. Students will become confident in their respective abilities to voice their opinions about the art they view as well as to write about how they interpret art, literature, or poetry. They will develop a sense of empowerment to help them overcome the academic anxiety that can lead to feeling intimidated that is often associated with being required to complete a task for which one has no connection.

Analyzing art can be a daunting task. My students have lived through a significant change in perspective, transforming perceptions of the works of art which have been a long-standing part of Richmond’s history. They have seen empowerment of the people (many of them school aged) who openly protested the continued presence the Confederate statues being used to send an obvious message about racial hierarchies in the South. In this unit, the students will analyze the social and political messages sent by the presence of the statues, the glorification of an era in which the enslavement of Africans was not only acceptable, but worthy of fighting a war to protect. The students will be encouraged to comment on the politics of the monuments. The discussion will be enhanced by the reference to the recent works of contemporary art that reflects the events of 2021.

Unit content

The goal of my instruction is for this unit is to increase student confidence and enjoyment when viewing works of art. I want them to make personal connections to what they are going to learn, to improve their reading comprehension and writing skills related to their reading of *The History of Mary Prince*. My goal is for students to also gain a greater appreciation for the courage of enslaved people in the newly formed America and Caribbean parts of the British Empire in the 16th through the early part of the 19th centuries.

The major focus of the content selections described below are the interactions between art, race and history. The use of visual stimulation (viewing a visual media) and analyzing that visual representation in terms of historical context should be used to enrich the students’ experience with literature, in this case *The History of*

Mary Prince, A Slave Narrative and extending the comprehension of that literature through the writing process.

The works of Ty Hilton

The following work captures the populist energy and anger of the demonstration against the statues of Confederate generals discussed in the previous section. This untitled work shows an uncanny acumen and raw emotion. It is being used with the permission of the artist who I had the pleasure to interview. I was inspired to contact him after seeing his work hanging outside Virginia Union University. He leaves no ambiguity in his purpose for documenting the removal of these statues. "Black lives matter. These statues don't."⁴

Figure 1



(Ty Hilton, *Untitled*, 2021, jpeg photograph)

It is unorthodox to include the work of such a young artist in a curricular unit like this. The artist's capturing of this moment with personal, youthful insight is the reason this will be utilized as the foundation for tying my students' history to the story. When asked what reaction he wants to generate from these works, Mr. Hilton

responded, “When people see these photographs, I want people to feel many emotions. Anger, sadness, but also happiness. For too long people of Richmond were forced to see these statues we hated. In the protest over police brutality, we rose up. We took control of the situation.”⁵ Analyzing the work of Mr. Hilton will serve as a bridge to the introduction of art discussion and analysis of work that will lead to the analysis of the works of the 18th -19th century. Mr. Hilton has expressed a willingness to come into the classrooms and work directly with the students of Richmond Public Schools.

Direct comparison of two statues in Richmond

Building upon the work of Ty Hilton will be a direct comparison of two statues that symbolize two very disparate perspectives of the confluence of art, race, and history in Richmond, Virginia. The two works to be compared are *Rumors of War* by Kehinde Wiley (For the image visit <https://vmfa.museum/calendar/events/aari-2020/rumors-of-war-3/>)⁶ and J.E.B. Stuart by Fred Moynihan (For image visit <https://rotj.wordpress.com/2010/01/22/j-e-b-stuart-on-monument-avenue/>)

The remarkable arc of Kehinde Wiley who was born, poor, black, and gay in south-central Los Angeles to becoming one of the most important voice in the artworld today can serve as an inspiration to young people everywhere.⁷ Emphasizing this is important in order to counteract the “art is for rich white people” stereotype that is so ingrained in our culture. Wiley’s artistic talent put him in the history books as the first African-American artist to paint an official portrait of a United States President when he painted President Barack Obama and resulted in his being named one of Time Magazine’s *100 Most Influential People* of 2018.⁸

Wiley’s work that is included in this unit is *Rumors of War*. He presents an African-American male teenager in control of the horse seemingly preparing for some sort of combat engagement. This work stands outside the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in very close proximity to where the Confederate statues that stood for a century were removed. The students will first view the confederate statue of J.E.B. Stuart (which Wiley admits *Rumors of War* was meant to challenge⁹) and then *Rumors of War* in order to use that comparison to discern Wiley’s intent which was a message of inclusivity. The fact that *Rumors of War* is outside of the VMFA in Richmond means it is easily accessible to all the students of Richmond Public Schools.

The following quote from Kehinde Wiley will be part of the unit as well. It is an excerpt from a speech from the unveiling of *Rumors of War* in New York City prior to it being moved permanently to Richmond. “I’m a Black man walking those streets, I’m looking up at those things (Confederate monuments) that give me a sense of dread and fear. What does that feel like — physically — to walk a public space and to have your state, your country, your nation say ‘this is what we stand by’? No. We want more, we demand more, we creative people create more. And today, we say yes to something that looks like us, we say yes to inclusivity. We say yes to broader notions of what it means to be an American.... Are we ready?”¹⁰

Fred Moynihan who created the J.E.B Stuart statue was born in Great Britain and educated at the Royal Academy of Art in London. His statues of Civil War veterans were erected from Georgia to Connecticut. The statue erected in Richmond, Virginia in 1907 was removed from Monument Avenue in in 2021.¹¹

The confederate monuments were erected to establish a construct of racial hierarchy. The removal of these works and the creation of new works of art related to their removal advocate for a more egalitarian society. This will help the students look for cues about racial hierarchies and colonial domination in the art work we study as we read *The History of Mary Prince*.

Mary Prince - A literary context

There are some steps the teacher will take prior to introducing this unit on incorporating trans-Atlantic art of the period of the British Empire as a companion to understanding *The History of Mary Prince*. Teachers who are using this narrative in their classroom need to address some areas of contextualization. The next sections will help address some specific issues that should help teachers with some educational areas of consideration prior to using this unit in the classroom.

Focus on awareness of bias as a threat to authenticity

Students, and society at large, need to interpret and evaluate information with a critical awareness of bias and its threat to accuracy. Too often students read something and assume it to be true without asking how historical context or even a writer's personal agenda can influence the veracity of what they read. The book claims to be the narrative of Mary Prince, but she did not write it. She verbally recounted it in 1828 to a white English abolitionist who then wrote it. It was published in 1831.¹² During the Victorian Era, it is not just possible, but more likely probable, that the person recording the words that Mary Prince spoke toned down any aspects sexual abuse that was rampantly inflicted by slave owners on female (and likely young male) enslaved Africans during this time. The book describes her being "stripped of her clothes" but does not elaborate. I am in no way advocating for high school students to read graphic accounts of sexual abuse. It is always important to be cognizant that an unacceptable number of our students are survivors of sexual abuse. The discussion of what really happened to Mary should not be handled indelicately. Students should be made aware that information they are reading was filtered from one perspective brings with it an inherent bias and a reduction in historical accuracy. This can provide a great opportunity for discussion with students about why this may have been omitted and whether a genuine account of history is even possible. Does all documented history come with inherent bias? Does all art? Can even something like a photograph or a video be truly unbiased? Even though art and historical documents may have biases and might not be completely authentic, merely being aware of and aggressively analyzing that bias can actually lead to a more complete understanding. The works of George Morland (discussed later in this section) will tie to this focus. There is no evidence that he saw slaves being traded in Africa or the Caribbean. He certainly never saw a shipwreck in Africa. However, he did create very powerful works about those exact topics. Does that diminish those works?

Focus on the theme of family- separation and violence

Mary Prince being separated from her family in the early part of the narrative and being separated from her husband later in the narrative are impactful events in her life. Again, some of our students may have experienced being separated from their parents so a delicate touch is of absolute necessity. This is an excellent time to discuss empathy with the students. Do they empathize/sympathize with Mary? The students obviously viscerally despise the men and women that show no regard for the attachments Mary has formed with her family and husband. Students can discuss why the slave owners have such blatant disregard the various emotional bonds between Mary, the other slaves, and their families. To what extent does it come from hyper-masculinized patriarchy that afforded men the right to inflict violence on anything they considered "theirs"? Is it significant that the women, especially, Mrs. Wood (the wife of the man who owns Mary Prince) often requests her husband to beat Mary? How does Mary challenge the audience to mentally choose to side with the victims or to side with cruel men and women and the dehumanizing status quo? There is an opportunity to ask the students whether they would have separated families if they were in the situation of the slave owner. If they say that they would not have inflicted this cruelty, the teacher can discuss if they, the students, have ever laughed at cruelty being inflicted upon someone in a video on the internet. There are

several works of art will be relevant to this area of discussion. The works from George Morland and J.G. Stedman will be discussed in the next section and will be used to complement the analysis of family separation and violence in *The History of Mary Prince*.

Art from the Trans-Atlantic British Empire

An important goal of this unit is to instill in the students a sense of empathy for Mary Prince and how the absence of autonomy, and degradation at the hands of white owners dominated much of her life. By including these works and the writing and discussion that follow, the more visually oriented learners in class will especially benefit. The students should glean from the inclusion of works of art in the unit an empathy for what Africans endured and a genuine appreciation for their courage. The teacher will provide a general background of the artist with an emphasis on whether the artist ever witnessed the events they painted and, tying back to bias and purpose, and the degree that it should impact our interpretation and analysis of that work.

The students will view each work individually at a place in the narrative where it relates to a point in Mary's life. By discussing the works the students will have a great understanding of what they are reading as well as develop their skills of artistic analysis. Every class is different and, depending on the strengths of the class, the teacher may choose to conduct a whole class discussion or divide the class into sections to allow for small group discussions before reuniting to discuss the work.

The works of George Morland

Figure 2



The Slave Trade George Morland, Oil on canvas 33.5" x 48.5" ca. 1788 (This work is classified as public domain and is available at https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2010.8.1ab)

George Morland was a painter whose talent was obvious from an early age. He spent much of his young adulthood trying to escape his very controlling father, who viewed George a way to make money easily. Morland battled alcoholism for much of his life.¹³ We have no evidence that Morland ever travelled to Africa or the Caribbean so it is unlikely that he actually witnessed the events he paints in *Slave Trade*. Its intense portrayal of the separation of an African family ties well with the early section of *The History of Mary Prince* where Mary, whose life has been relatively idyllic for an enslaved person in this era, has her world decimated when she is suddenly separated from her family and sent to live on another plantation. The subsequent sadness haunts her throughout the rest of the book. This work also provides an excellent opportunity to examine the artist's purpose and use of symbolism. The artist chooses to include Africans being involved in the sale of other Africans. Is he implying that somehow the Africans brought this upon themselves? Also, the canoe in the foreground is clearly painted and the ship in the background is fuzzy. This is interpreted as it is clear that the family is being separated and one or more is going on the canoe. The fuzziness of the ship represents the unknown location to where they are destined to be sent. In the book Mary is at the mercy of the finances and whims of her owners and is often moved to various parts of the Caribbean and eventually to England.

Figure 3



European Ship Wrecked on the Coast of Africa, known as African Hospitality, ca 1790 Oil on canvas 34.25" x 48.125" (This work is classified as public domain. A watercolor enhanced print is available at <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:42019>)

After the students analyze, discuss, and write about *The Slave Trade*, they will view *African Hospitality*, the work Morland created right after *The Slave Trade*. In this work, Morland is clearly influenced by works of abolitionist poetry in that time.¹⁴ The Africans are giving succor to shipwrecked Europeans. The Africans have the power and are doing the opposite of what the Europeans at that time were doing to the Africans. They were not only assisting the Europeans, but the husband and wife are next to each other as opposed to being violently separated, as depicted in the previous work. The work however is not free from some details that seem to contradict what appears to be the artist's primary message. The teacher should guide the students to discuss why the well-dressed (after a shipwreck?) Europeans are the center of the painting where the viewers gaze is focused. Why are the Africans nearly naked? (binary relationship) Why is the European baby's face so detailed and beautiful when the African babies are much less details and less a part of the action of the painting? The teacher will guide the students to analyze how this portrayal of the more dressed, more detailed Europeans when compared to the benevolent Africans, undermines the Morland's message that Europeans adopt a more humanized view of Africans. Or was the depiction of Europeans necessary for the dissemination of this work in order to spread its abolitionist message?

Both of these works were made into prints and circulated widely through England and France by associates of growing abolitionist movement.¹⁵

The work of John Gabriel Stedman

Figure 4



Print by William Blake of *Flagellation of a female Samboe Slave* by John Gabriel Stedman (1796). 10" x 7.64"

(This work is classified as public domain and is available at <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.4991.html>)

One can argue that John Gabriel Stedman is one of the most complicated figures in the analysis of trans-Atlantic slavery during the era of Mary Prince. He was a Scottish soldier who worked for the Dutch military suppressing slave and maroon uprisings in Dutch controlled South America and felt that slavery was a necessary labor system for the production of sugar. He later had an intense intimate relationship with an enslaved woman, Joana, for whom he seems to have genuine affection.¹⁶ This relationship contributes to not so subtle sexual overtones in some of Stedman's sketches. Stedman kept a journal and his first account of the realities of slavery in the Dutch colonies were published in England and widely distributed. Many of works would be turned into engravings by William Blake and others were published and sold by prominent anti-slavery societies in England.¹⁷ This work, *Flagellation of a female Samboe Slave*, is quite disturbing. It shows a nearly naked enslaved African woman hanging from a tree from her wrists which are bound. In the background it appears that two white men are ordering two enslaved African men to go whip the woman. This image brings to discussion many areas of our focus on violence and racial and gender hierarchies in the book. Also, the word samboe (also spelled sambo) was once use quite freely but today is considered offensive. Students can discuss the evolution of how we treat offensive words and have incorporated a more sensitive approach with their use, so what is the role for curators, creators, and consumers of art that some people find

offensive. This should facilitate conversation about censorship.

Stedman's work will be viewed after an especially grotesque scene in *The History of Mary Prince* where Mary witnesses physical punishment being inflicted on pregnant slave with whom she has a very close relationship. Mary sees her friend beaten so severely that she loses the unborn baby. This provides an opportunity to discuss the use of this artwork. Does it adequately capture the inhumanity of the scene? Does it go too far? To what extent is Austrian Professor Mario Klarer accurate when labeled Stedman's work "humanitarian pornography"?¹⁸

Post Emancipation Artwork- two very different depictions

Near the end of *The History of Mary Prince*. Mary achieves emancipation in England. The emotional process of emancipation is nearly impossible to imagine. The students feel a catharsis as this woman, whose life they have connected with, will no longer be subjected to atrocities at the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Wood, the last of her owners. This is an excellent place to have student view to very divergent works of art that commemorate the emancipation of the African slaves in America.

Emancipation Group by Thomas Ball (Image available at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b01250/>)

This work of that was placed in Lincoln Park in Washington D.C. to commemorate the end of slavery. The Emancipation Memorial by a man named Thomas Ball. Thomas Ball was a white man from New England. The work was funded with monies raised by emancipated slaves.¹⁹ The work's contribution to our history is enormous and it is vital for students to view this work in order to attain at true meaning of "emancipation".

Emancipation Group features a paternal Abraham Lincoln standing over a kneeling newly emancipated African man. At certain angles in certainly appears to be shining President Lincoln's shoes. This work is sometimes pejoratively referred to as the shoe shine memorial.²⁰ The binary relationship is unmistakable. Abraham Lincoln is standing and fully dressed which is easily compared to the African male who is kneeling and nearly naked. This provides students an excellent opportunity for analysis as to why Ball choose to portray emancipation of African slaves this way. Is the African man meant to be perceived to be rising and this is just the first step to him achieving his equal place in America? Is he encouraging all Americans to help their newly emancipated brothers and sisters? Is it meant to demean the African slaves by projecting the message that African slaves are still inherently inferior to white America? Frederick Douglas wrote, "What I want to see before I die is a monument representing the negro, not couchant on his knees like a four-footed animal, but erect on his feet like a man."²¹

In 2021 Washington D.C. delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton is reintroduces a bill to remove Emancipation Group where it stands in Lincoln Park in our nation's capital.²² This followed replicas of Emancipation Group being removed from other locations most notably Boston.²³ Once again discussions on censorship will be encouraged.

Forever Free by Edmonia Lewis

(Image available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forever_Free_by_Edmonia_Lewis_-_The_Met,_2022.jpg)

Edmonia Lewis was a supremely talented woman of mixed African American and Native American heritage. Having been denied prospects to develop her artistic abilities in the United States, she joined a population of

expatriated American writers and artist who found acceptance and opportunity in Italy.²⁴ Her work takes its name from a line in the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁵ It depicts not just a man but a woman as well. The male figure raises a fist with a broken chain and looks upward to signify strength while his other hand rest caringly on the back of the woman. The students will analyze this work and the Emancipation Group from the point of view of Mary Prince. Which would she prefer? An interesting aspect of this work is the woman in the sculpture. Though, as mentioned before, Ms. Lewis was a mix of African and native ancestry. Yet, she chose to depict the woman in *Forever Free* as having facial features and hair more commonly associated with woman of European descent. Well into the 20th century, Meta Vaux Fuller commented that this sculpture shows that “The man accepts [freedom] as a glorious victory, while the woman looks upon it as a precious gift.”²⁶ Students can discuss what the impetus for Ms. Lewis choosing these features for her female subject might be. Is there a degree of bias in its creation? Patrons of the arts in the 19th century were still overwhelming white and male. Might this have shaped this amazing and historically significant work?

Teaching Activities

What I see/What it means

Helping students become comfortable with looking at art and writing about how they interpret what they see is a major goal of this unit. *What I see/ What it means* is a teaching strategy from the University of Arizona Museum of Art and will be used as method of transferring student analysis to writing. Students will look at a work. They will be provided a T-chart with a heading of Observation/ Denotation /What I see on the left and Interpretation/ Connation /What I think it means on the right. I have added two sections to the basic T-chart. The students will write above the T-chart in a section called “Historical Context” in which the teacher will provide some background on the artist as well as major historical events at that time that may have shaped the importance of the work. After the students complete the of Observation/ Denotation /What I see and Interpretation/ Connation /What I think it means sections, they will add a “How this relates to The History of Mary Prince” section underneath. This is available in the Classroom Resources section at the end of the unit.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS):

The activity is based on the VTS teaching strategy, also from the University of Arizona Museum of Art. This activity asks students to engage in three basic questions. The questions ask students to employ a careful analysis of not only the action seen in the painting or photograph, but also to reflect on evidence (parts of the photograph or painting) that led them to that summation. These inquiry-based questions are designed to stimulate dialogue and discussion. These three questions should encourage students develop confidence by starting with the obvious and progressing to the more subtle.

- 1) What’s going on in this picture?
- 2) What do you see that makes you say that?
- 3) What more can we find?

Free Writing

At times during the reading of *The History of Mary Prince*, the students will stop and write a short paragraph analyzing one of the following prompts: a) If you could communicate with Mary at this point of the story what would you say to her and why? b) What is the book not telling the reader that could be occurring at this point? c) What are the binary relationships in the story and how might they be expressed in art? What type of medium would you use to express this scene if you were an artist? Why? d) Is there anything that you (the student) are feeling inspired to write about as it relates to what Mary has experienced in what we read today? Students will be given approximately 40 minutes and will be reminded to focus on a strong introduction with a thesis statement, two body paragraphs and quote support from the book or detail support from the works of art.

Establishing Chronology

The students will benefit from understanding when the actions in *Mary Prince* occur in relation to other historical events taking place at that time which shaped slavery/abolition. Students will create timelines that show the major events in the life of Mary Prince and the creation of the works of art we study, as well as the years that Denmark, England and the USA banned the slave trade, banned slavery as an institution, in addition to the Haitian Revolution and the Jamaican Uprising.

Classroom Activities

Analyzing artwork

I would start this unit with a discussion of what the students recall about the removal of the statues of the Confederate generals from Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. Students will write what they recall and how they felt during protests of these statues and their subsequent removal for five minutes. I will then put on the white board a picture of the statue of J.E.B Stuart by Fred Moynihan. Using the What I See/What it Means strategy, the students will complete a T-chart analysis of the statue in their notebooks. On the left they will write what they observe about the statue. On the right they will notate what they think the artist was trying to say and the purpose of erecting this statue. Next, they will view the statue *Rumors of War* by Kehinde Wiley and using the same What I See/What it Means strategy, will complete the same T-chart analysis. Then they will view the untitled jpeg photograph by Ty Hilton and using the What I see/What it means strategy, complete the same T-chart analysis. Students will be assigned to groups of 3-4 and will use these three works to create a short essay addressing the topic, "How can art be used to reflect norms of racial hierarchies in a society."

Synthesis essay

At the point in *The History of Mary Prince* where Mary is first separated from her family the students will analyze the theme of loss using both what they have read and two works of art by George Morland, *The Slave Trade* and *African Hospitality*. Incorporating the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) the students will answer three questions in their notebooks: A) What's going on in this picture? B) What do you see that makes you say that? and C) What more can we find? The students will be instructed to leave extra space and add to what they have written. The teacher will lead a discussion about the two works allowing the students to share what

they observed in and wrote about in relation to both of Morland's works. Students will compare and contrast the works with what they have read. When students are preparing to write the essay analyzing the theme of separation and loss having studied these two works should enable them to visualize the pain enslaved people like Mary endured. This will also help humanize the enslaved people and help see them as individuals and not as an abstract concept. In addressing the theme of loss students will support their assertions using quotes from *Mary Prince* and details from one or both of the paintings to explain how Mary Prince, the woman who transcribed her words, and Morland express these themes. The students will need to include a thesis statement and at least two body paragraphs, but as the book will not yet be completed writing a full essay is not necessary.

Narrative essay

Near the end of the book Mary is granted her freedom from the abusive Mr. and Mrs. Wood. Students should feel a catharsis and an admiration for the courage of Mary. The students will study two important sculptures that relate to the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States, *Emancipation Group* by Thomas Ball and *Forever Free* by Edmonia Lewis. The students will again use the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to answer three questions in their notebooks: A) What's going on in this picture? B) What do you see that makes you say that? and C) What more can we find? After analyzing the works the students will write an essay using the skills of artistic analysis and comprehension of the conflicts Mary faced and overcame. The students will take the perspective of Mary to write an essay about how she feels after her emancipation and which of the two sculptures, *Emancipation Group* or *Forever Free* Mary would feel is the better expression of how she felt upon receiving emancipation.

Culminating Activity

Argumentative Essay

Through the skills taught in this unit, my goal will be to have the students synthesize their reading skills, writing skills and artistic analysis skills to create a final argumentative essay. Given the six pieces of art (some they have already studied, some they have not) the students will craft an argumentative essay as to which work should be selected as the cover for a hypothetically re-release of *The History of Mary Prince*. The works will include the two George Morland works *The Slave Trade* and *African Hospitality, Flagellation of a female Samboe Slave* by John Gabriel Stedman, *Emancipation Group* by Thomas Ball, *Forever Free* by Edmonia Lewis and the photograph of *The Emancipation and Freedom* sculpture on Brown's Island in Richmond²⁷ (used with the permission of the sculptor Thomas Warren and the photographer Ansel Olson) which can be found at the website (<https://warrensculpture.com/project/emancipation-freedom-monument/>) If a student chooses to do their own research and finds a work they feel is suitable for use as the cover for *The History of Mary Prince* and can write an argumentative essay for that piece that will be acceptable as well.

The goal of this final argumentative essay will be for students to demonstrate a comprehension of the themes of *Mary Prince*, to write an argumentative essay (including a counterargument), and to interpret visual art and to apply that interpretation that demonstrates higher level engagement. There should be a strong introductory paragraph that ends with a clear thesis that ties together art, race, and history. The students should feel emboldened by their abilities to interpret art and incorporate these evaluative skills as they reflect both historical and modern racial hierarchies. At least two specific details on the theme of loss and separation need to be addressed in the body paragraphs and a paragraph that presents a counterargument needs to be included as well.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

Visual Arts Standards

All.3 The student will analyze, interpret, and evaluate artwork.

- a. Evaluate the effectiveness of the communication of artistic vision/voice in personal works of art.
- b. Analyze art exhibitions in written reflections.

This Virginia standard will be addressed in class discussions, graphic organizers to help students organize their analyses and interpretations and writing reflections on how the details in the work help communicate the artists' messages.

Al.6 The student will understand historical and cultural influences of art.

- a. Explore works from diverse artists (including diversity of ability, ethnicity, race, and gender).
- b. Explore works of historical and contemporary art movements.
- c. Analyze art in relation to events, places, cultures, and historical periods.
- d. Evaluate how social, cultural, and historical context influence meaning in works of art and design.

The students will study the historical context of global abolition movements in England and the Caribbean as a backdrop for studying the art depicting trans-Atlantic slavery in the 17th -19th centuries. Students will compare the depictions of racial hierarchies in art from that period to depictions in Richmond from the 20th and 21st centuries. Included in this unit will be presentations of and discussions artwork from a diversity of artists.

English/ Language Arts

12.5 The student will read, interpret, analyze, and evaluate a variety of nonfiction texts.

- a. Use critical thinking to generate and respond logically to literal, inferential, and evaluative questions about the text(s).

The students will be required to engage in higher order thinking skills as they read and demonstrate these skills periodically throughout the book in the form of answering comprehension questions and by participating in discussions about the text.

12.6 The student will write in a variety of forms to include persuasive/argumentative reflective, interpretive, and analytic, with an emphasis on persuasion/argumentation.

- a. Produce arguments in writing that develop a thesis to demonstrate knowledgeable judgments, address counterclaims, and provide effective conclusions.
- b. Blend multiple forms of writing, including embedding a narrative to produce effective essays.

The students will write a synthesis, a narrative and, a final argumentative essay. These essays will require the students use the standards listed above. By employing various types of essays at different stages of the book the students will apply differing skills that address differing reading and writing standards. Students will be

guided on how to write an effective thesis statement and how to support that thesis with evidence from the text and the works of art we study. They will be required to include a counterargument in their argumentative essay they write at the end of the unit.

Classroom materials Prince, Mary. *The history of Mary Prince: A west Indian slave*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018.

Projector/Whiteboard

Notebook for writing

This graphic organizer worksheet

Work Artist	
Background	
Observation/ Denotation /What I see	Interpretation/ Connation/What I think it means
How this work relates to <i>The History of Mary Prince</i> -	

Sample Graphic Organizer- created by JD DeReu for this unit

Notes-

¹ www.maryprince.org

² Jain, Nikki. "Top 10 Tourist Attractions in Richmond, Virginia."

³ Golberg, Barbara. Virginia to Take down Robert E. Lee Statue on Wednesday."

⁴ "Bearing Witness - Ty Hilton." Second Street Gallery. Accessed July 25, 2023.
<https://www.secondstreetgallery.org/bearing-witness-ty-hilton>.

⁵ DeReu, JD. An Interview with Ty Hilton. Personal, June 15, 2023.

⁶ Wiley, Kehinde *Rumors of War* (2019)

⁷ Duncan, Alexandra "Kehinde Wiley Paintings, Bio, Ideas."

⁸ Neunedorf, Henri "Judy Chicago, Jr, and Kehinde Wiley Make Time Magazine's List of 100 Most Influential People."

⁹ Duncan, Alexandra "Kehinde Wiley Paintings, Bio, Ideas."

¹⁰ Edward, Roz. "Kehinde Wiley's 'rumors of War' Is an Artful Counter to Confederacy Monuments."

¹¹ <https://prabook.com/web/frederick.moynihan/2449734>

¹² <https://maryprince.org>

¹³ Hayes, John. *British Paintings of the Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries*. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue. Washington, D.C., 1992: 176-177.

¹⁴ Carrier, Dan "Art World's First Brush with Slave Trade."

¹⁵ May, Stephen J. "Before Turner's Slave Ship : Art in the Service of the Anti-Slavery Movement ." Before Turner's "Slave ship"

¹⁶ Gwilliam, Tassie. ""Scenes of Horror, "Scenes of Sensibility: Sentimentality and Slavery in John Gabriel Stedman's 'Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam.'"

¹⁷ Simon, Ed. "William Blake, Radical Abolitionist"

¹⁸ Humanitarian Pornography: John Gabriel Stedman's "Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam" (1796)

¹⁹ "Emancipation Monument," *DC Historic Sites*

²⁰ Anderson, Antje. "Forever Free (1867)."

²¹ Ibid

²² Zapata, Christian. "D.C. Delegate Reintroduces Bill to Remove Emancipation Memorial from Lincoln Park."

²³ Anderson, Antje. "Forever Free (1867)."

²⁴ Miller, Angela et. al American Encounters 277

²⁵ Anderson, Antje. "Forever Free (1867)."

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Warren, Thomas Jay "Emancipation and Freedom Monument" (2021)

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<https://edmonialewis.org/elBlog/index.php/2021/02/23/forever-free-1867/>. An informative website that provides information on both Edmonia Lewis and Thomas Ball.

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<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/art-worlds-first-brush-with-slave-trade>. A good resource for learning about early abolitionist artwork.

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<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/wiley-kehinde/>. A good resource for creating background on Kehinde Wiley

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