Lesson Four: Sugar and the African Slave Trade

Overview:

The multiple connections between sugar and the need for labor will be explored in this lesson. Maps will be analyzed. The resulting slave trade will be looked at as an economic system, and the question raised is slavery still present in the world today? Students will read and analyze a newspaper article, and create original posters on the topic.

Suggested time allowance: 3 class periods

Unifying Themes: (based on the National Council for the Social Studies)
- Geography, Humans and the Environment
- Development, Movement, and Interaction of Cultures
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Global Connections and Exchange
- Creation, Expansion, and Interaction of Economic Systems

New York State Social Studies Framework
- Standard 2: World History
- Standard 3: Geography
- Standard 4: Economics
- Key Ideas and Conceptual Understandings
  - 5.3 European Exploration and Its Effects: Various European powers explored and eventually colonized the Western Hemisphere. This had a profound impact on Native Americans and led to the transatlantic slave trade.
  - 5.3c The transatlantic trade of goods, movement of people, and spread of ideas and diseases resulted in cultural diffusion. This cultural diffusion became known as the Columbian Exchange and reshaped the lives and beliefs of people.
  - 5.3d Africans were captured, brought to the Americas, and sold as slaves. Their transport across the Atlantic was known as the Middle Passage.
- Social Studies Practices:
  - Gathering, Using and Interpreting Evidence
    - Develop questions to help identify evidence about topics related to historical events occurring the Western Hemisphere that can be answered by gathering, using, and interpreting evidence.
    - Identify evidence and explain content, authorship, purpose and format, identify bias, explain the role of bias and potential audience with teacher support.
  - Chronological Reasoning
    - Explain how events are related chronologically to one another in time.
    - Identify and classify the relationship between multiple causes and multiple effects.
Common Core Learning Standards for Literacy and Social Studies

- RH.5-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.5-8.2: 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.
- RH.5-8.3: Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes a law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
- RH.5-8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- RH.5-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- W.5.11: Create and present an original poem, narrative, play, art work, or literary critique in response to a particular author or theme studied in class
- W.5.11a. Recognize and illustrate social, historical, and cultural features in the presentation of literary texts
- SL.5.1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Essential Unit Question:

- Was European exploration and colonization positive or negative for human beings?

Resources/Materials for this lesson:

- “How Sugar Changed the World.” (included)
- “Maps Showing the Connections between Sugarcane Production and the Slave Trade.” (included)”
- “African Slave Trade.” History Channel. 4 minutes. http://www.eyewitnesshistory.com/slavetrade.htm Definite point of view. Slave trade occurred with complicity of Africans but was the first industrialized slave trade involving demand and supply.
- “Assignment Discovery: Middle Passage of the Slave Trade.” How Stuff Works. :45, http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/27702-assignment-discovery-middle-passage-of-slave-trade-video.htm The Middle Passage of the slave trade was the trip from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S. For the slaves, it was horrific, inhumane, and unbearable, and many died along the way.
Activities/Procedures:

Day 1

1. Begin lesson by projecting the image and the sentence below, “Put some in a cup of cocoa, sprinkle it on fresh strawberries, add it to cake batter. What are we talking about?” on the white board. After students identify “sugar,” allow them to continue to name uses for sugar, song lyrics “A teaspoon of sugar makes the medicine go down . . .” etc. Ask what can we conclude about the role of sugar in our lives?

2. Distribute, “How Sugar Changed the World.” (included) Conduct a whole class reading, as you continue to project the text on the white board. Ask questions such as:
   - In paragraph 1 what does “White Gold” mean?
   - In the last sentence in paragraph 1 what does “cash crop” mean? Can you give other examples of cash crops? (tobacco, cotton, corn etc.)
   - Where did sugar cane originally come from? What do we call the process when something from one culture is adopted by another? (Cultural diffusion) Why did it do well in the Caribbean and South America?
   - In paragraph 4 what problems are raised? Why didn’t the Europeans use native peoples as labor? Why didn’t they simply do the work themselves?
   - Introduce the idea of human capital. Where were the Europeans going to get human capital from?
   - Paragraph 5 poses two benefits for the solution of using peoples from Africa. What are they? (more profit; you don’t have to pay slaves; easy to do it is a continuation of trade network they already had.)
   - Look at paragraph 5 line 3. Why was the slave trade called ‘Maafa” in Swahili?

3. Homework: Distribute “Maps Showing the Connections between Sugarcane Production and the Slave Trade.” Tell the students that they are museum curators and they have to write a label (the size of a small index card) to put next to each map they are placing in an exhibition. The placard should include the name of the map, its purpose, and the most important things the audience will learn from the map.

Day 2

1. Post the three maps assigned for homework in different parts of the room, and have various students present their labels to the class. The class has to decide which map is being described. Post several labels next to the correct maps.

2. Explain to the students that the process of transporting the captured slave to the New World was called the Middle Passage. Ask if they can speculate why? (The initial Passage was the capture in Africa; the final Passage was the sale to a plantation owner.)

3. Note to teacher: The Middle Passage was cruel and inhuman and driven by profit. If you simply want to give students an idea of what the Middle Passage was like show “Assignment Discovery: Middle Passage of the Slave Trade.” If you want to explore more deeply the economic side of the Middle
Passage show “African Slave Trade.” History Channel. In this video Dr. Gates argues that although there has always been slavery, this is the first time it is the first time is becomes part of supply and demand. In either case be sure the students understand the economic motive for the slave trade.

4. Ask students if they think slavery exists today? Have students develop questions about the topic. Duplicate and distribute “There are 30 million slaves in the world, report says,” “Does Slavery Exist in the World Today?” graphic organizer (included).

5. Have students read the article in groups, and complete the graphic organizer. Note that this article does not deal with a counterargument. Ask students if they could think of one? Discuss the content, author, purpose, and format. Who is then potential audience? What is the author’s bias?

Day 3

1. Students are to create a poster that would raise awareness about global slavery today. You might send the completed posters to
   Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
   Palais des Nations
   CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Evaluation/Assessment:

- Labels for Maps
- Poster Raising Awareness about Global Slavery Today

Vocabulary:

- **slavery** - a system under which people are treated as property to be bought and sold, and are forced to work.
- **Middle passage** - the forced voyage of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas