

OUR WHITE HOUSE

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT

EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

PART I. FROM THE FOUNDATION UP

This education resource guide is designed to augment the content included in Part I of the NCBLA's anthology *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. Included on these pages are engaging activities and discussion questions regarding some of the articles and stories in Part I of *Our White House*. We invite you to print and share these materials with young people at home and in the classroom. Education resource guides for the other parts of *Our White House* are available on OurWhiteHouse.org.

Slaves Helped Build the White House! (pages 11-12)

by Walter Dean Myers

Discussion Questions

- If so many people and historians were aware that slaves played a role in building the White House, why was that factual story not told to students for over 200 years?
- Discuss the meaning of the words **irony/ironic** and **incongruous/incongruity** with your students. How do those words relate to our democratic history, American concepts of freedom, and a discussion of slavery?
- Discuss the meaning of the words **symbol/symbolism**. Is the White House more than a place of work and a home for the presidents and their families? Is it a national and international symbol? If yes, what does it symbolize? Is it a symbol of our democracy? When something becomes a symbol, it infers a significance or a meaning to that object, place, or person. Is that meaning changed when an element in total contradiction to the original meaning or symbolism is discovered—as in discovering the historical fact that slaves built the White House, an international symbol of democracy? Do acts of inhumanity change, or not change, the White House's overall symbolic significance?
- What are other symbols represent American democracy to the world? Are any of those symbols laced with irony or incongruity?

Activities

In his essay, Walter Dean Myers cites several primary sources that provide evidence that African-American slaves helped build the White House. Challenge your students to become historians themselves and put them to work in their school and public library, and doing online research, to find the primary source evidence mentioned by Walter Dean Myers in his essay. You may want to discuss this activity with your school and local public reference librarian to share research tips with your students.

Following are online resources that will help teach students how to conduct historical research:

- [“Research Tips for Parents and Teachers”](#)
- [“The Library, a Place of Discovery”](#)
- “Making Sense of Evidence” on the History Matters Website of George Mason University: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/makesense>

- “Educator Resources” on the National History Day Website: <http://www.nhd.org/educatorresources.htm>
- Teaching History Website: <http://teachinghistory.org/>
- Kids.gov Website: History for Teachers Resource Page: <http://kids.usa.gov/grown-ups/history/index.shtml>
- History Matters Website of George Mason University: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>
- Digital History Website: <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>

Challenge your history students to do research in libraries and online to discover:

- What kinds of labor, skilled and unskilled, were provided by the slaves contracted to build the White House?
- Who was paid for that labor? The slaves themselves? The slave owners?
- What other Washington, D.C. buildings were built with slave labor?
- Where did the slaves live in the new capital city? How were they treated?
- Were slaves sold and traded in the nation’s new capital? If yes, how many years did that practice continue?

Read and Learn MORE

Books

For children: *Brick by Brick* by Terrece Clark

For adults: *Black Men Built the Capitol* by Jesse Holland

Online Resources related to the topic of slaves building the White House

“History of Slave Laborers in the Construction of the United States Capitol:”
http://artandhistory.house.gov/art_artifacts/slave_labor_report1.pdf

“Slaves Built the White House, U.S. Capitol: Video Clipboard:”
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/slaves-built-the-white-house-u-s-capitol/

“White House History Timeline: African Americans and the White House:”
<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/african-americans-in-the-white-house-timeline>

“Q & A: Did slaves build the White House?”
<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/did-slaves-build-the-white-house>

“The Slaves of the White House Finally Get to Have Their Stories Told:”
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/The-Slaves-of-the-White-House-Finally-Get-to-Have-Their-Stories-Told-180957917/?no-ist>

“The legend of slaves building Capitol is correct:”
<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2009/jan/19/nancy-pelosi/legend-slaves-building-capitol-correct/>

“CNN: White House Built by Slave:” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AydvldZvnOE>

“National Book Festival Video: *A Slave in the White House* by Elizabeth Dowling Taylor”
<http://www.c-span.org/video/?308235-7/book-discussion-slave-white-house>

“The ‘Black History’ of America’s White House:”

<http://www.npr.org/2011/02/03/133470777/liberty-limited-in-white-houses-black-history>

“American University Radio Transcript: “African-Americans and the White House:”

http://wamu.org/programs/metro_connection/11/04/08/african_americans_and_the_white_house_transcript

Online Lesson Plans

“Making History at the White House: African Americans and the White House (Grades 4 – 8):”

<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/teacher-resources/african-americans-and-the-white-house>

“Slavery at the Capitol: A Study in Contrasts (Grades 8-12):”

<http://www.uschs.org/classroom/lesson-plans/african-american-history-month/slavery-and-the-u-s-capitol/>

Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826 (pages 13-14)

Written by Milton Meltzer

The following activities and resources can be used in any discussion regarding Thomas Jefferson.

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

- **The Declaration of Independence**

Read the *Declaration of Independence* written by Thomas Jefferson aloud with your students. Then share this description of Thomas Jefferson's slave ownership at Monticello at: <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources/profile/263/Middle/Jefferson-and-Slavery/>

Also share photos and picture of Jefferson's home and plantation at Monticello with your students at: <http://www.monticello.org/>

Discuss the following questions with students:

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," owned during his lifetime, over 600 slaves. If Thomas Jefferson truly believed what he wrote in the Declaration of Independence, how could he own slaves? Why would he own slaves? Could he afford his home and vast plantation, an elite life-style in his era, if he had to pay his house servants and farm laborers? Did he compromise his democratic beliefs owning slaves? What might have happened to his home, his farmland, his family, his quality and way of life, if he had freed his slaves during his life time? Would you be willing to give up your quality of life and an elite life style to act on your principals? Did Thomas Jefferson?

Further online materials to enhance your classroom discussion:

"Mr. Jefferson's Servants:"

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/slaves/bacon.html>

"The Dark Side of Thomas Jefferson:" <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Little-Known-Dark-Side-of-Thomas-Jefferson-169780996.html>

"Thomas Jefferson and Slavery:" <http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-slavery>

- **Character Qualities**

Have your students draw up a list of character qualities that they believe a president or national leader should have. For example: should a president or national leader be honest and never lie? Should a president or national leader be loving and generous and fair to all people? Discuss those qualities and prioritize them. Have your students draw up a list of topics and issues that they think should be of concern to a president or national leader. Using the students' lists, ask them questions that will make them thoughtfully consider human perfection and imperfection; freedoms and protections. In other words juxtapose the ideal against hard core reality, encouraging their critical thinking skills, and their empathy skills. Put them in the position of being "president" and see how they rationalize their own choices.

Discuss the following questions with students, if age appropriate:

Should a president or national leader tell young people to do something or act one way, even if he or she does not follow that suggestion him or her self? Can a president who smokes cigarettes tell young people not to smoke cigarettes? Can a president who has never fought in a war, or seen combat, order young people to go into combat? Can a president espouse a belief in freedom for all people, and yet privately own slaves? Can a president or national leader be honest all the time? Should he or she tell the truth if he or she knows that if they tell the American people the truth he or she will not be elected or reelected? Can you think of examples when that might happen? What would you do? Do you tell the truth all the time? Why or why not? Are there any reasons a president or national leader may not tell the truth, or only share part of the truth because of safety or national security?

Online resources that might aid your discussion:

"What Makes a Good President?"

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/choice2004/leadership/>

"What Makes a President a Great Leader:" http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-06/national/35505731_1_george-w-bush-cabinet-selection-president-and-offer

"Help Wanted: President of the United States:"

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/help-wanted-president-of-the-united-states/>

Read and Learn MORE

Books for Young People

Nonfiction:

Thomas Jefferson: A Picture Book Biography by James Cross Giblin and Michael Dooling

Thomas Jefferson: Architect of Democracy by John B. Severance

Thomas Jefferson by Cheryl Harness

Good historical fiction: *Jefferson's Sons: A Founding Father's Secret Children* by Kimberly Bradley

Books for Adults, Nonfiction (recommended by the Smithsonian Institute)

Jefferson and His Time, by Dumas Malone

American Sphinx by Joseph J. Ellis

Twilight at Monticello by Alan Pell Crawford

The Jefferson Image in the American Mind by Merrill D. Peterson

The Hemingses of Monticello by Annette Gordon-Reed

Online Resources about Thomas Jefferson the man and president

“American President: Thomas Jefferson:” <http://millercenter.org/president/jefferson>

“American President: A Reference Resource:”

<http://millercenter.org/president/jefferson/essays/biography/print>

“Brief Biography of Thomas Jefferson:”

<http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources/profile/81/Brief-Biography-of-Thomas-Jefferson/>

“Presidential Facts: Thomas Jefferson:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/thomas-jefferson-1801-1809/>

“The Thomas Jefferson Papers:” http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/

“Thomas Jefferson:” <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson>

“Thomas Jefferson:” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/thomasjefferson>

Online Lesson Plans about Thomas Jefferson and slavery issues

“Thomas Jefferson’s Attitudes Toward Slavery:”

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/lessons/lesson/414/>

“Slavery and the Making of America:” <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/teachers/lessons.html>

Online Lesson Plans about Thomas Jefferson the man and president

“The Monticello Classroom:” <http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/lessons/>

“The Declaration of Independence: "An Expression of the American Mind:"

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/declaration-independence-expression-american-mind>

“Thomas Jefferson on the Sedition Act:” <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/thomas-jefferson-sedition-act>

“Jefferson vs. Franklin: Revolutionary Philosophers:” <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/jefferson-vs-franklin-revolutionary-philosophers>

“Thomas Jefferson’s Library: Making the Case for a National Library:”

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/jefferson/>

“Thomas Jefferson Teachers Guide:” http://www.history.com/images/media/pdf/10-01903_JeffersonFIN.pdf

White House Colonial Kitchen Gardens (pages 15-17)

Written by Stephanie Loer, Illustrated by S. D. Schindler

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

- **Presidential Portraits**

Share S.D. Schindler recent illustration of Thomas Jefferson on page 16 of *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* with students. Then show them two portraits of Thomas Jefferson by Gilbert Stuart at:

Bowdoin College Museum of Art: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/exhibitions/2012/intimations-independence.shtml>

Monticello Website: <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/gallery/image/102/Edgehill-portrait-of-Thomas-Jefferson/>

Compare and contrast the Schindler's illustration with Stuart's portraits. Which makes Thomas Jefferson look more presidential? And what does "looking presidential mean"? Which makes Thomas Jefferson look more approachable? Why might Thomas Jefferson want a more formal painting done of himself? Why did politicians, national leaders, and presidents have flattering portraits painted in early America? Why do politicians, national leaders, and presidents want flattering photos of themselves today? Why do you think S.D. Schindler chose to paint Thomas Jefferson, with unkempt hair and his shirtsleeves rolled up, munching on a tomato in his garden, rather than a stiff, formal pose of Thomas Jefferson?

*Have students create their own portrait as a future president. Go through *Our White House* and have your students look at how each president is portrayed. If they were the president, how would they like to be portrayed in a portrait that the world would see? Informally? Formally? With family members or alone? In a room or outdoors? In an action pose or still? With a favorite object? Students may want to have a hand mirror to look at themselves as they draw, or they may want to have photos of themselves for reference. Give them scratch paper to sketch and figure out their pose and the design of their portrait. When their sketch is completed, give them good paper, pencils, crayons, paint, or pastels and have them draw and/or paint themselves as president of the United States!*

- **American History Garden**

Design and plant an American history garden at school. You can choose from a variety of themes to plan and plant:

- A kitchen garden filled with heirloom vegetables and herbs.
- A garden filled with plants discovered by Lewis and Clark on their Westward expedition.
- A garden using plants that were once used to dye cloth and then use those plants to dye cotton cloth or clothes.
- A garden with plants that historically grew in the area in which you live.

Show your students how to do historical research in the library and online, so they can discover plants that will meet the needs of their chosen theme. The websites below can you help you with this activity:

Kids Gardening Website: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

“Checklist for Starting (and using) a School Garden:” <http://dcgreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Checklist-for-Starting-a-School-Garden.pdf>

“Ye Olde Kitchen Garden:” <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/07/garden/ye-olde-kitchen-garden.html?pagewanted=all>

Jefferson's Monstrous Bones (pages 18-21)

Written by Barbara Kerley

Bones on the Floor, Illustrated by Brian Selznick (22-23)

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

- **Mastodon vs. Woolly Mammoth!**

Send your students on a virtual expedition to discover mastodons and woolly mammoths! Divide your class up into sets of two teams, each set having one mastodon team and one mammoth team. Each team will research details about their animal in the library and online, finding the time period of each animal's existence, as well as the geography, climate, terrain, and vegetation of the animals native habitats, including visual references. Give each team some scrap paper, a piece of poster board, scissors, glue sticks, pencils, paint and brushes, crayons, paper and colored construction paper. Each team will sketch their animal and its environment on the scrap paper developing a plan for a cut-paper illustration collage on their poster board. Individual team members can draw, then cut out of paper, their animal, or a herd of their animal, trees, grass, bushes, rocks, rivers, plants their animal might eat, predators, other animals of their historical era, anything and everything that is historically accurate, to create a great environmental portrait of their mammoth or mastodon. Each set of teams can then share their work the rest.

For examples of what your students can experiment with using cut paper collage, get library books that feature the work of illustrators who work in cut paper, like: Eric Carle, Leo Lionni, Giles Laroche, Ezra Jack Keats, Molly Bang, Lois Elhert, Rebecca Emberly, Steve Jenkins, or David Wisniewski.

Online resources that may help you and your students with this activity:

“Big Bone Lick, Kentucky:” <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/big-bone-lick-kentucky>

“Fossil Mysteries:” http://www.sdnhm.org/archive/exhibits/mystery/fg_mastodon.html

“Mammoths and Mastodons: All American Monsters:”
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/Mammoths-and-Mastodons-All-American-Monsters.html>

“Romantic Natural History: Thomas Jefferson:”
<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/romnat/2011/06/07/thomas-jefferson/>

“Treasures of the APS:” <http://www.amphilsoc.org/exhibits/treasures/mastodon.htm>

“Upper Jawbone of Mastodon:” <http://www.monticello.org/site/house-and-gardens/upper-jawbone-mastodon>

- **Prehistoric Washington, D.C.**

Launch your students on a research journey to find out what dinosaurs, and later, what mammals, lived along the Potomac River before man ever stepped foot on the North American Continent. Then have your class create a prehistoric timeline of animal evolution from 110 million years ago moving forward. Your students can draw their favorite land, sea, and air animals on separate sheets of paper, and then adhere them to the timeline.

Plan and execute a paleontological or archaeological dig with your students. These online resources can help you:

“Beyond Artifacts: Teaching Archaeology in the Classroom:”

<http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org/resources/BeyondArtifacts2011.pdf>

“Classroom Activities and Lessons from the University of California Museum of Paleontology:” <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/museum/k-12.html>

“Classroom Digs:” <http://www.saa.org/publicftp/public/resources/classdigs.html>

“Hands on History: Dig!”

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/hands_on_history/dig/

“Paleontology Classroom Activities:”

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/education/resources/subj_09_03.html

“Paleontological Experiences for Science Teachers: Student Activities:”

<http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~museum/hughes/stu-act.html>

“Schoolyard Dig:” http://www.archaeological.org/pdfs/education/digs/Digs_Schoolyard.pdf

“Shoebox Dig:” http://www.archaeological.org/pdfs/education/digs/Digs_shoebox.pdf

“Teaching Paleontology in the National Parks and Monuments:”

http://www.nature.nps.gov/geology/education/teaching_paleo.pdf

An Unusual Guest (pages 24-26)

Written by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

- **Primary Sources**

Use these documents to aid activities and questions, and student research on the Lewis and Clark Expedition:

“Teaching With Documents: The Lewis and Clark Expedition:”

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/lewis-clark/>

“The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition:” <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>

- **Imaginary Lewis and Clark 1804 Expedition**

Invite your students to join Lewis and Clark on their expedition. Conduct a class discussion, helping your students to imagine the world of 1804 when there was no electricity, Internet, batteries, indoor plumbing, gas fueled transportation, paved highways, processes food, Laundromats, etc. A great way to proceed is show them art and illustrations from the era, and then ask them a series of questions. For example: We are joining Lewis and Clark on their expedition, how will we travel thousands of miles in all kinds of weather? What will we do if our transportation is stolen when we are deep in the wilderness? Can we report the theft to anyone? If we cannot get our horses or boats back what will we have to do? What are our choices? What equipment will we need to find out way in territory that may not be mapped? How will we find our way without GPS? What will we eat, how will we keep our food from spoiling? What will happen if we get sick or are injured on the journey? Where will we wash or go to the bathroom? How will we keep our spirits up? What will we do if we get homesick? After a thorough discussion, ask them if they would really want to join Lewis and Clark on their journey.

- **Nature Treasure Hunt**

Create a nature treasure hunt using compasses:

“Compass Skills Scavenger Hunt:” http://alex.state.al.us/lesson_view.php?id=16497

“Compass Treasure Hunt” on the Eartheasy Website:

http://eartheasy.com/play_compass_treashunt.htm

“Compass Treasure Hunt” on the Curriki Website:

http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Coll_melissawebber/Lesson10CompassTreasureHunt

Online Lesson Plan Resources related to Thomas Jefferson and/or the Lewis and Clark Expedition

“Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: The Lewis and Clark Expedition:”

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/lewis-clark/activities.html>

“The Lewis and Clark Expedition:”

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/lewis-clark/>

“The Lewis & Clark Expedition: Documenting the Uncharted Northwest:”

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/108lewisclark/108lewisclark.htm>

“On This Day With Lewis and Clark:” <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/day-lewis-and-clark>

“Lewis and Clark: The Journey West:”

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson296.shtml

“Lewis and Clark: The National Bicentennial Exhibition: For Educators:”

http://www.lewisandclarkexhibit.org/4_0_0/

“Lewis and Clark: The Language of Discovery:”

http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/lewis_clark/

“Corp of Discovery: Lewis and Clark:”

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/lessons/lesson/388/Corp-of-Discovery-Lewis-and-Clark/>

“Packing for a Transcontinental Expedition:” <http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/class/109.html>

The Capitol City in 1800 (page 27)

Illustrated by Mike Reagan

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

- **Map Comparisons**

Have your students compare and contrast the 1800 Capitol City map on page 27 with Roxie Munro's contemporary map of Washington, D.C. on pages 182 and 183 in *Our White House*. Has the geography of the area changed? Ask your students to try to figure out where current Washington landmarks would be located on the old 1800 map.

- **Solve the Mystery: What Happened to Goose Creek, also known as Tiber Creek?**

Have your students compare and contrast the 1800 Capitol City map on page 27 with Roxie Munro's contemporary map of Washington, D.C. on pages 182 and 183 in *Our White House*. Can they find Goose Creek, also called Tiber Creek on the new map? If not, what happened to it? Did it evaporate? Use your public or state library search engine to locate this book: *Washington Through Two Centuries: A History of Maps and Images*. Exploring the maps and illustrations in this book will help your students find the answer to the mystery of the missing river, as will other books about the history of Washington, D.C. Let your students loose to do an investigative search!