

Opening Up the Textbook: Exploring How Language Shapes the Historical Narrative Using Brutality in Enslavement Practices as a Case Study

Note: This lesson was developed by Justine Lee at the University of Maryland and Magdalena Gross at Stanford University as well as Alison Jovanovic at University of Maryland.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9 -10.6. Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9 -10.9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

C3: The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History

D2.His.6.9 -12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.7.9 -12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.9.9 -12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D3.3.9 -12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

D3.1.9 -12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

Driving Set of Inquiry Questions:

- Why might it be important to know that white society was complicit in terror and brutality during and after of slavery?

- How does the language in which history is written shape how we understand past events?
- How might analysis of perspective and corroboration of sources influence our understanding of an event?
- In knowing the reality of the past, how can we try to right injustices in the present?

Lesson Objectives:

Content:

1. Students will assess the impact of the use of brutality on enslaved people in America.
2. Students will discuss the importance of studying the role of white society in using terror and violence to as a means of control of enslaved populations.

Disciplinary:

1. Students will evaluate the impact of word choice in the development of the historical narrative.
2. Students will assess the impact of perspective in the development of the historical narrative.
3. Students will evaluate and corroborate sources to develop a more comprehensive historical narrative.

Context for Teachers: It is important that high school students know that white people utilized terror and violence in increasing amounts to enslave people. Not only did slave owners participate in terrorizing enslaved peoples, but also, the local white populations participated in the terrorizing of enslaved people. Often textbooks fail to paint the whole picture, making it imperative that students have the opportunity to review primary sources and corroborate the readings to develop a more comprehensive account.

Lesson Format: Inquiry/ Opening Up of a Textbook

Definition of Format: Developed at SHEG (Stanford History Education Group)- the OUT is an activity that is designed to help students question the “one truth” narratives of textbooks by corroborating using primary source documents. It is meant to push students to critically evaluate the textbook. The teacher chooses a short excerpt from a textbook or dominant narrative (such as a Disney movie), and juxtaposes this with sources. Students read and compare, contrast. Typically there is a summative assessment explaining the differences or comparing the textbook to primary source accounts. This OUT will help a teacher do the following:

1. *Direct Challenge:* Using primary documents to challenge textbook facts or interpretation.
2. *Narrativization:* How does the textbook tell the story?

3. *Articulating Silences*: Who is left out of the textbook's narrative?
Try bringing in voices of the silenced or moving issues of narrative choice to the surface.
4. *Vivification*: Breathing life into a text that only mentions, or omits.
5. *Close Reading*: Careful, attentive focus on word choice, including adjectives, titles, and the like.

Time Frame: 90+ minutes (possible 20+ minute extension if optional sources used)

Assessments:

Formative:

- Teacher circulates around the room to assess student progress while working
- Document Analysis packet can be collected

Summative:

- Students will complete a RAFT (Santa, 1988) writing assessment to synthesize textbook excerpts and primary/secondary source accounts

Materials:

- Ability project (video link)
- Sticky notes and/or highlighters for text close reading
- Link for Warm-Up: <https://youtu.be/SMvPXAowNgk>
- **Handout 1-Brutality in Enslavement Document Packet**
 - **Document A:** Secondary Source, Baptist, E. *The Half Has Never Been Told* (2015).
 - **Document B:** Two Textbook accounts to show some change over time. Pg. 377 in the textbook *Call to Freedom* 2007, and Pg. 226 in *A History of the United States*. Lexington, 1986.
 - **Document C:** Memoir of Charles Ball
 - **Document D:** Memoir of William J. Anderson
 - **Document E:** Image depicting plans for shackles (OPTIONAL)
 - **Document F:** Ladies Whipping Girls (OPTIONAL)
- **Document 2-Brutality in Enslavement Document Graphic Organizer** for taking notes during the document based inquiry
- **Document 3-Brutality in Enslavement Summative Assessment:** RAFT Writing Prompt

Lesson Procedures:

1. Pose the Inquiry Question (whole class) Time: 2 mins

- a. Ask the first guiding inquiry questions as a whole group before watching the video:

- i. Why might it be important to know that white society was complicit in terror and brutality during and after slavery?
 - ii. Why might it be important to know that white society was complicit in terror and brutality during and after slavery?
 - iii. How does the language in which history is written shape how we understand past events?
 - iv. How might analysis of perspective and corroboration of sources influence our understanding of an event?
 - v. In knowing the reality of the past, how can we try to right injustices in the present?
- b. Present all the questions for the day (do not provide clarification at this point)- Explain to students that they will be watching a video and reading scholarly research, as well as primary source documents to help answer these questions.

2. Warm-Up: Engage Students in the Topic (independent then whole class) Time: 10-12 minutes

- a. Give students Bryan Stevenson clip about America's first lynching museum: <https://youtu.be/SMvPXAowNgk>
- b. Have students watch the clip independently on Chromebooks/laptops if possible and reflect on the question.
- c. Ask students to consider the first inquiry question as they watch the video: Why might it be important to know that white society was complicit in terror and brutality during and after of slavery?
- d. Spend 3-4 minutes discussing student reactions to the initial inquiry question posed.
- e. Teacher Note: For more information on the
 - i. museum please go to: <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/>
 - ii. Equal Justice Initiative: <https://eji.org/about-eji>

3. Elicit Students' Initial Ideas (whole group to small group and then share out whole group again) Time: 10-12 mins

- a. Assign students into groups of 2-3.
- b. Give students Handout 1: Brutality in Enslavement Document Packet and focus on Document A: Edward Baptist Excerpt. Read as a class, modeling Close Reading strategies.
- c. Pose the next guiding inquiry question: How does the language in which history is written shape how we understand past events?
- d. Discuss as a class.
 - i. Additional questions that can be used for discussion:
 1. How does language shape what we think we know?
 2. How does Edward Baptist's use language to reshape what we know about slavery?
 3. What new words is he using?
 4. How do these new words get closer to the truth?

- e. After the initial setting of the question, have students now use Handout 2: Brutality in Enslavement Document Graphic Organizer to write their responses (that you discussed previously).
- f. If not redundant: Have groups share some ideas out related to what they learned from Document A in regard to the question and list the ideas on the board.

4. Introducing the Opening Up the Textbook-OUT (Independently or in Small Groups, then as Whole Class) Time 15 minutes

- a. Ask students to turn to Document B: Textbook excerpts.
- b. Have the students read Documents B, which are the two textbook excerpts-- independently or in their group, annotating as they go. They will use the graphic organizer, comparing the textbook to Edward Baptist's thesis.
- c. After the students have reviewed this and written their responses to the "questions to consider" in their small groups, bring the class back together to debrief as a whole class. Classroom discussion questions might include:
 - i. Are the textbooks accurate?
 - ii. How does the language in the textbook align or not to the language we used as a class?
 - iii. What skills should we use to interrogate the textbook?
 - iv. What are the differences between Baptists language and the textbook language?
 - v. What role does language play in historical understandings?
 - vi. How does the use of certain kinds of language help or hinder historical understandings of this time period?
- d. *Teacher Note:*
 - i. *A supporting goal of the lesson is to encourage us to consider the oppressor terminology- punishment for what? Punishment was a term used by whites as if those they enslaved were doing something wrong. We want to shift student mindset from these widely accepted terms such as punishment and plantation to torture and slave labor camps.*

5. Rethinking the Dominant Narrative by Corroborating Sources (both in small groups and in whole class) Time: 25 mins

- 1. Ask students to now turn to Documents C and D.
 - g. The students should carefully read the two documents, and discuss the answer to the Questions to Consider with their small group. They should record their answers on the graphic organizer.
 - h. Bring the class back together to debrief as a whole class.

Questions to consider:

 - i. What new information is presented in the new documents?
 - ii. How do the accounts/perspectives differ from the textbook?

- iii. How does it make you feel, as you read the accounts?
- iv. What revisions to the dominant narrative might you want to include?
- i. *Teacher Note-Connection to Present Day: The method of torture of being tied up by your thumbs described in Document C has been documented as a form of torture used in the American prison systems post-1865. For more information, please consider reading:*
 - *American Prison* by Shane Bauer or a summary of the book at <http://time.com/5405158/the-true-history-of-americas-private-prison-industry/>

6. OPTIONAL-Rethinking the Dominant Narrative by Corroborating Sources (both in small groups and in whole class) Time: 20 mins

- j. Repeat the above sequence above but with Documents E and F if you would like. Have students complete the graphic organizer.

7. Debrief (independently and whole class) 15 minutes

- k. Look at the driving inquiry questions again as a class:
 - i. Why might it be important to know that white society was complicit in terror and brutality during and after slavery?
 - ii. How does the language in which history is written shape how we understand past events?
 - iii. How might analysis of perspective and corroboration of sources influence our understanding of an event?
 - iv. In knowing the reality of the past, how can we try to right injustices in the present?
- l. Give students a few minutes to consider the questions again independently after being exposed to the various documents.
- m. Complete a whole class discussion on the documents and the driving questions. Be sure to check in with students emotionally as well.

8. Assessment (Individual) 15 minutes

- n. Pass out Handout 3: Brutality in Enslavement Summative Assessment, which is a RAFT (Santa, 1988) formatted writing prompt.
- o. Please see handout for more detailed steps on completion.
- p. The next day, you may want to allow students to share their writings with their peers in partners, small groups or to the whole class.

Handout 1

Name: _____ Date: _____
Teacher: _____ Class Pd: _____

Brutality during Enslavement Document Packet

Document A:

Source: Baptist, E. E. (2016). *The half has never been told: Slavery and the making of American capitalism*. Hachette UK.

Head Note: *Edward Baptist is an award winning historian who is now a professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. He is the first historian to use terms like “enslaver” instead of “planter”, “forced labor camps” instead of “plantation” in his descriptions of Enslavement in the United States. His work has been called groundbreaking and radical. Notice here how he uses language and framing to reorient what enslavement was in the United States.*

Some historians have called lashings “discipline,” the term offered by slavery’s lawgivers and the laws they wrote, which pretended that masters who whipped were calmly administering “punishment” to “correct” lazy subordinates’ reluctance to work....Perhaps one unspoken reason why many have been so reluctant to apply the term “torture” to slavery is that even though they denied slavery’s economic dynamism, they knew that slavery on the cotton frontier made a lot of product....No one was willing, in other words, to admit that they lived in an economy whose bottom gear was torture. **Yet we should call torture by its name.** Historians of torture have defined the term as extreme torment ...

The idea that the commodification and suffering and forced labor of African Americans is what made the United States powerful and rich is not an idea people necessarily want to hear. Yet it is the truth. Forced migration had shaped their lives....forced separations, violence and new kinds of labor...the expansion of slavery has shaped the story of everything in the pre-Civil War United States.....Enslaved African Americans built the modern United States, and indeed the entire modern world, in ways both obvious and hidden.

Questions to Consider:

1. What language does this historian compel us to use? Why?
2. How does this language reframe how we understand enslavement?

Document B: Two Nextbook Excerpts

**Textbook Source #1: Boorstin & Kelley, A History of the United States.
Lexington, MA: Ginn & Co, 1986. p.226.**

In their simple log huts in the slave quarters—huts often not much different from those occupied by poor Southern whites—they built their private world. There they married (though sometimes owners conducted these ceremonies), worshipped, celebrated the birth of a child, mourned the death of a friend, in their own way. In their new American homeland, as their owners wanted, the blacks became Christians. But they also combined this Christianity with some elements from Africa and made it special. They often went to the master’s church on Sunday morning, where they sat in a separate section. But it was at their own service later in the day that they could freely practice their religion. There they heard the sermons of eloquent black preachers.

**Textbook Source #2: Stuckey and Salvucci. *Call to Freedom*. Holt,
Rinehart and Winston. 2000. Pp.377.**

Life Under Slavery Control

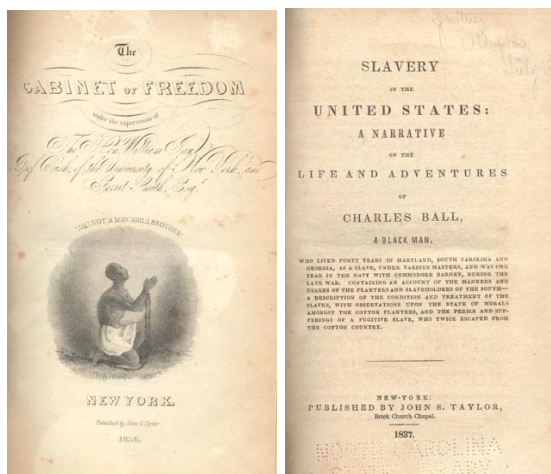
Some planters offered rewards to encourage slaves’ obedience. More often, however, slaveholders relied on punishment. Some slaveholders would severely punish one slave in front of all the others as a warning to the entire group...Just witnessing such cruel treatment was enough to frighten many slaves into obeying the planter’s or overseer’s orders.

Questions to Consider:

1. What terms do the authors use for those who enslaved people? What is the term for those who were in captivity? What term does the author use for the beatings? Why might they choose these terms vs others?
2. What are some differences between the texts?
3. According to *Call to Freedom*, how many people typically “relied on punishment”?
 - a. What does the word punishment imply?
 - b. Why might this implication be inaccurate?
 - c. What other words might you use?

Document C:

Source: Excerpt (pages 115-119) from the autobiography of Charles Ball, a man from Maryland who was held in captivity at a cotton plantation in Congaree, South Carolina. *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*. New York, 1837. Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.



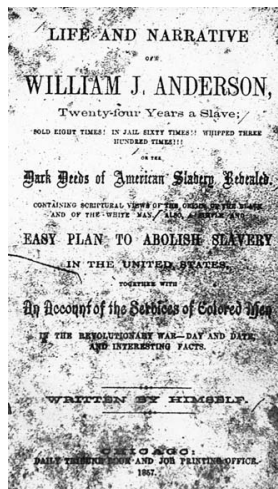
It was late in the afternoon before any of the gentlemen came; but, before five o'clock, there were more than twenty white people.... I was stripped of my shirt, and the waist-band of my trousers was drawn closely round me, below my hips, so as to expose the whole of my back, in its entire length ...each of my thumbs was lashed closely to the end of a stick about three feet long...my thumbs were bound, over the top of the post, which is about eighteen inches square; the chair was then taken from under me, and I was left hanging by the thumbs...The pepper tea was now brought... This doubly-burning liquid was thrown into my raw and bleeding wounds, and produced a tormenting smart, beyond the description of language....until I had received ninety-six lashes, and my back was cut and scalded from end to end....I had entered upon eternity, and that my sufferings would never end.

Questions to consider:

1. What language does Charles Ball use to describe this scene?
2. How many people were there? Why were so many white people there- what does that tell us about complicity?
3. In reading this document, what other words might you use other than “punishment” to describe this scene? Why?
4. How does this differ from how the textbooks portray the period? What can we learn as a result?
5. How is this account more or less reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet? In other words, which perspective/account do you believe more and why?

Document D:

Source: Excerpt from *Life and Narrative of William Anderson, Twenty-four Years a Slave; Sold Eight Times! In Jail Sixty Times!!! Whipped Three Hundred Times!!! Or The Dark Deeds of American Slavery Revealed*, Written by William J. Anderson, Chicago: Daily Tribune Book and Job Printing Office. 1857. Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.



My master came down, put irons on my hands and feet, and laughed in anger at my calamity. He took me back upon the cotton farm, where he with three or four others, stripped me stark naked, or divested me of all my apparel, drove down four stakes, about nine feet apart, then (after I was tied hard and fast to the cold ground) with a large ox whip, laid on me (he said) five hundred lashes, till the blood ran freely upon the cold ground and mother earth drank it freely in. I begged, mourned, and cried, and prayed; but all my lamentations **deep sadness** were only sport for him; he was a stranger to mercy. My pen would fail here to describe my agonizing feelings and I must leave the reader again to imagine my suffering condition. At the close of this brutal punishment he called for some salt brine **mixture of hot water and salt**, of the strongest kind, and had me washed down in it. O, that, with the whipping, was another hell to undergo....It did appear as if the man had no heart at all...no one can realize such bodily anguish except one who has passed through the like...My master often ... came out to the field to whip, cut, slash, curse, swear, beat and knock down several, for ... nothing at all.

Questions to Consider:

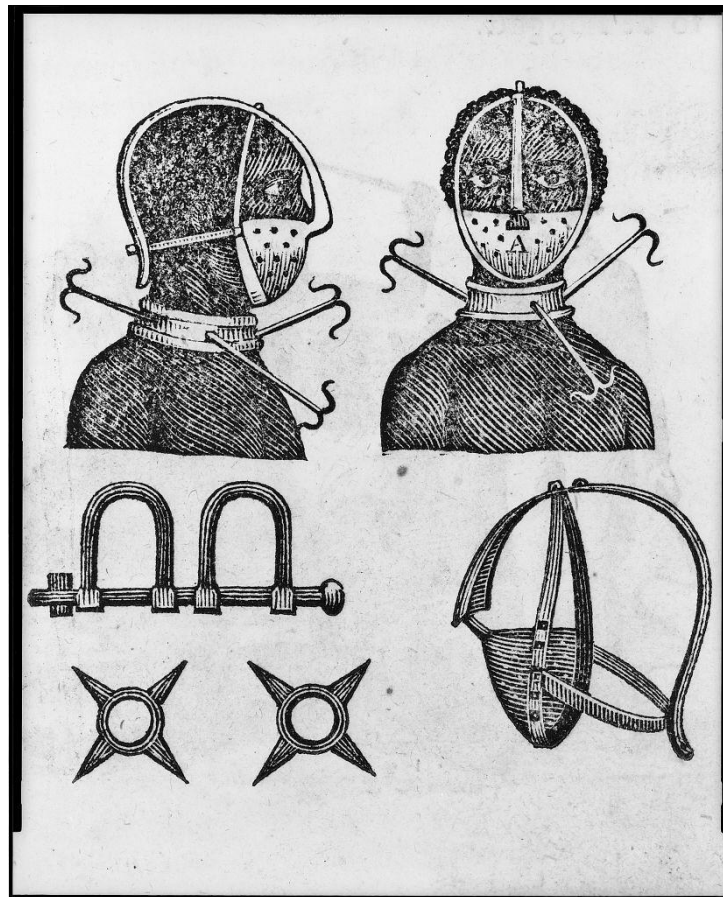
1. What language does William Anderson use to describe this scene?
2. According to Anderson, why did the enslaver beat people?
3. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this account?
4. How is this account more or less reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet? In other words, which perspective/account do you believe more and why?

Supplemental Sources: To Be Used at Teacher Discretion

Document E:

Source: Illustration in: *The Penitential Tyrant*, Thomas Branagan. New-York: Printed by Samuel Wood, no. 362, Pearl-street, 1807. Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.

Head Note: Thomas Branagan was a reformed slave overseer on slave labor camps in Antigua. He authored many works on the brutality of slavery, this image comes from *The Penitential Tyrant* (a poem). He immigrated to Philadelphia before its publication, this was written in the United States.

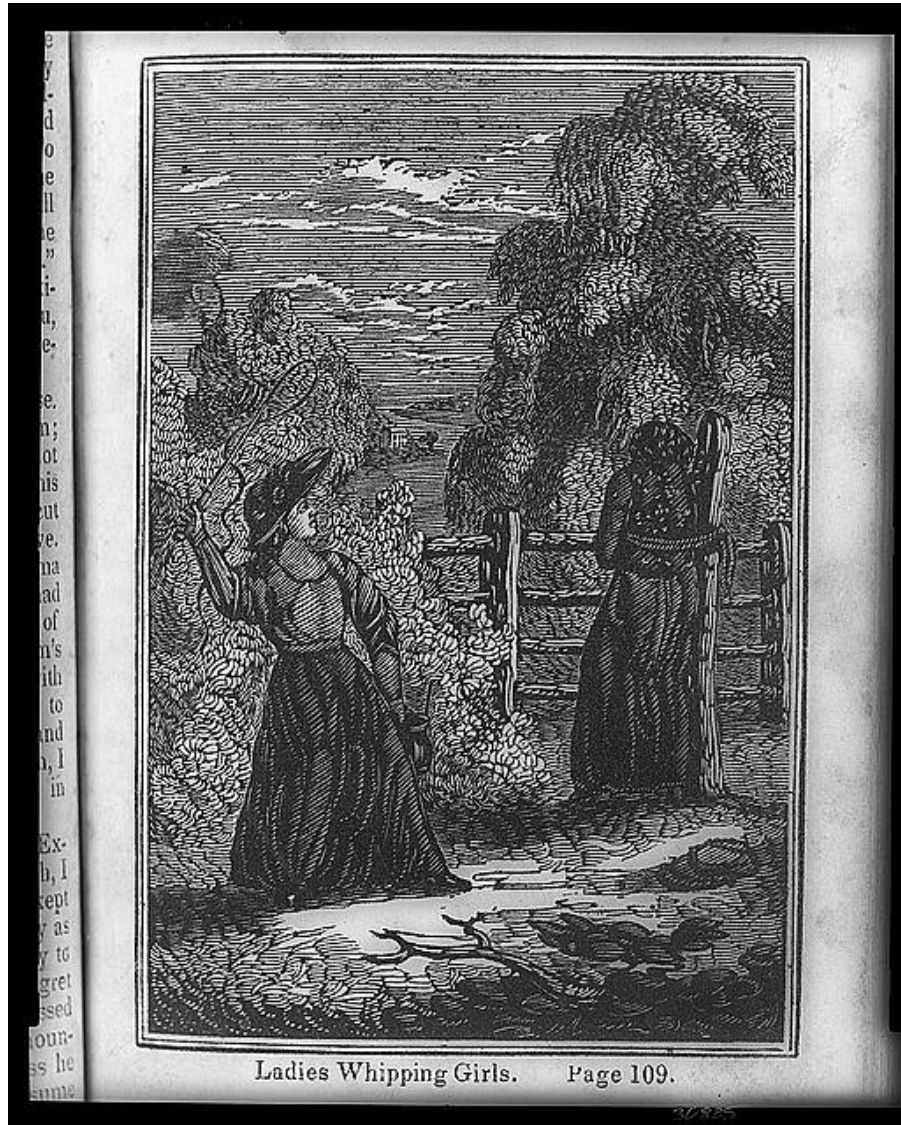


1. What does this diagram teach you about the brutality whites inflicted during the period of slavery?
2. In what ways is the blacksmith who developed this device equally responsible ethically as the slave owner/overseer who used it? What does that teach us about complicity during enslavement?
3. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this primary source?
4. How is this source more reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Supplemental Sources: To Be Used at Teacher Discretion

Document F:

Source: Ladies Whipping Girls, picture of slavery in the United States of America / George Bourne. Middletown, Conn. : E. Hunt, 1834, p. 109. Abolitionist publication. Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.



1. What does this image show us about the role of some white women during enslavement?
2. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this primary source?
3. How does this source expand the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Handout 2

Name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Class Pd: _____

Brutality in Enslavement Document Graphic Organizer

Directions: Using Handout 1: Brutality in Enslavement Document Packet, please use this template to take notes on the various documents read.

Document A:

Source: Baptist, E. E. (2016). *The half has never been told: Slavery and the making of American capitalism.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What language does this historian compel us to use? Why?

2. How does this language reframe how we understand enslavement?

Additional Takeaways:

Document B: Two Textbook Excerpts

Textbook Source #1: Boorstin & Kelley, *A History of the United States*.

Textbook Source #2: Stuckey and Salvucci. *Call to Freedom*.

Question to Consider:

1. Language Choice:
 - a. What terms do the authors use for those who enslaved people?

 - b. What is the term for those who were in captivity?

 - c. What term does the author use for the beatings?

 - d. Why might they choose these terms vs others?

2. What are some differences between the texts?

3. According to *Call to Freedom*, how many people typically “relied on punishment”?
 - d. What does the word punishment imply?
 - e. Why might this implication be inaccurate?

Additional Takeaways:

Textbook #1:

Textbook #2:



Document C:

Source: Excerpt from the autobiography of Charles Ball

Question to Consider:

1. What language does Charles Ball use to describe this scene?
2. How many people were there? Why were so many white people there- what does that tell us about complicity?
3. In reading this document, what other words might you use other than “punishment” to describe this scene? Why?
4. How does this differ from how the textbooks portray the period? What can we learn as a result?
5. How is this account more reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Additional Takeaways:

Document D:

Source: Excerpt from *Life and Narrative of William Anderson*

Question to Consider:

1. What language does William Anderson use to describe this scene?
2. According to Anderson, why did the enslaver beat people?
3. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this primary source?
4. How is this account more reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Additional Takeaways:

Document E: OPTIONAL

Source: Illustration in: *The Penitential Tyrant*

Question to Consider:

1. What does this diagram teach you about the brutality whites inflicted during the period of slavery?
2. In what ways is the blacksmith who developed this device equally responsible ethically as the slave owner/overseer who used it? What does this teach us about complicity during enslavement?
3. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this primary source?
4. How is this source more reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Additional Takeaways:

Document F: OPTIONAL

Source: Ladies Whipping Girls, picture of slavery in the United States of America

Questions to Consider:

1. What does this image show us about the role of some white women during enslavement?
2. What can we learn from comparing the textbook account to this primary source?
3. How is this source more reliable than the textbook accounts provided in this packet?

Additional Takeaways:

Handout 3

Name: _____ Date: _____
Teacher: _____ Class Pd: _____

Brutality in Enslavement Summative Assessment

Directions: As a means of synthesizing your analysis of the textbook excerpts and primary/secondary sources on brutality during the period of enslavement in American History, you are tasked with writing an accurate and balanced account. In this task you will select from one of the four options provided, each including a 1.) Role 2.) Audience and 3.) Format and the shared 4.) Topic.

You must write 2-3 paragraphs developing a revised narrative (in contrast to the textbook accounts provided) using the approach you have selected. It is important that you carefully consider the perspective of the role you are writing from, the audience you are writing to, and the appropriateness of language used. You also want to be sure to make strong connections to the sources provided that you felt were most reliable/trustworthy to ensure you make an accurate, comprehensive and well supported account.

| | Role | Audience | Format | Topic |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---|
| A. | Historian | Self | Journal Entry | The use of brutality during the period of enslavement in America. |
| B. | Abolitionist | Activists | Booklet | |
| C. | Concerned Citizen | Newspaper Readership | Editorial | |
| D. | Textbook Writer | Textbook Readers | Textbook Excerpt | |

Option Selected: _____