



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 1, WEBISODE 5

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview



#### Let's Discuss

The earliest settlers of the English colonies planted the seeds of a fatal contradiction: slavery in a land of freedom. During the American Revolution, many citizens had a difficult time reconciling their demands for freedom for themselves with the continuing practice of enslaving fellow humans. When the authors of the Constitution failed to settle the slavery issue at the birth of the new nation, they only postponed the inevitable. Their failure would result in the horrors of the Civil War three-quarters of a century later.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Write the following quotation from Thomas Jefferson on the chalkboard, chart paper, or a transparency.

*...We have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.*

2. Ask the students.
  - What would happen if you let go of a wolf's ears? If you hung on?
  - In Jefferson's quotation, what does the wolf stand for?
  - Which action would represent justice?
  - Which action would represent self-preservation?
3. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Letting go of any wild animal gives it freedom to attack you. However, you cannot hang on forever. So holding a wolf by its ears is a no-win situation. The wolf in Jefferson's quotation is slavery. He knew that slavery is unjust, but to let go of it would cause tremendous problems. To allow slavery to continue would prevent these problems for the present, but not forever. Jefferson knew at some point, slavery had to end. He wrote these words in an 1820 letter, over thirty years after the authors of the United States Constitution failed to end slavery in the new nation. The nation was still

holding the wolf's ears, but terrible problems were resulting, and they would get worse.

### Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *What the Constitution Did Not Say*. Read the two sections of the Constitution with the students and help them to understand their meaning.
2. Ask the students, working in their teams, to speculate on the answers to the following questions.
  - To whom do the phrases “three-fifths of all other persons” and “such persons” refer?
  - How could you guess that they refer to enslaved Africans?
  - Why did the writers of the Constitution avoid the terms slave and slavery?
3. Students share their answers in a class discussion.
4. Students role play, some as southern delegates and some as northern delegates to the Constitutional Convention. What might some of the arguments have been that resulted in the wording of the passages on the student sheet?

### Teacher Directions

1. Share the following information with students.
  - Thomas Jefferson owned more than one hundred slaves. He did not free them. He knew slavery was wrong and said, “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. His justice cannot sleep forever.”
  - George Mason represented Virginia at the Constitutional Convention. He did not sign the finished document because it did not contain a bill of rights. He owned a large number of slaves. He did not free them. He knew that slavery was wrong and said, “That slow Poison, [slavery] . . . is daily contaminating the Minds & Morals of our People. Every Gentlemen here is born a petty Tyrant.”
  - John Rutledge, a wealthy lawyer who lost his fortune in the American Revolution represented South Carolina at the Constitutional Convention. He fought to protect slavery saying that slavery had nothing at all to do with morality, that, “Interest alone is the governing principle with nations.” He owned sixty slaves. He freed all but one.



History Sleuth



What do you Think?

What Do You Think,  
Continued.



Moving Toward  
Freedom



Connections

2. Ask the students.
  - How do the words and actions of these men conflict?
  - If you were a slave owner at the time the Constitution was written, what would you think? What would you do?
3. On slips of paper, students, working in their teams, brainstorm all the reasons that the writers of the Constitution might have had for abolishing slavery. On other slips of paper, students brainstorm all the reasons for keeping slavery. Which pile contains the most? Do some reasons have more importance than others?

### Teacher Directions

1. Students search the amendments to the Constitution to find which ones accomplished what the writers could not – the abolition of slavery and full citizenship for African American males.
2. Ask the students.
  - What big event happened before our country could make this move toward freedom?
3. What amendment gave African American women the right to vote?

### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Research** — Students research the delegates to the Constitutional Convention and, based on each delegate's writings and actions create a chart showing who would have wanted to end slavery and who would have wanted to preserve it. A good Internet source is the National Archives web site Founding Fathers Page @ <http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/constitution/southcar.html>.

**Math** — Students calculate how many years passed between the year the Constitution became law (1787) and the year international slave trade became illegal (1808). How many years passed between the year the Constitution became law and the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery (1865)?

**Art** — Students research and create an illustrated time line showing significant events for African Americans in their move toward freedom.

## WHAT THE CONSTITUTION DOES NOT SAY

### ARTICLE I. Section 2.

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, **three-fifths of all other persons.**

### ARTICLE I. Section 9.

The migration or importation of **such persons** as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importations, not exceeding 10 dollars for each person.

