

Two Celias: Comparing Womens' Experiences of Enslavement

Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will read two of the Stories posted on Enslaved.org. These selected Stories summarize and detail the lives of two enslaved women named Celia—one who lived in Florida and another who lived in Missouri. By comparing and contrasting the two stories, students will identify how the location and legal context of each woman's enslavement affected her life's outcome.

Please note: this lesson will require some foreground reading and discussion about the exposure to sexual violence (specifically, prolonged experiences rape and incest) suffered by enslaved women.

Length: 50 minutes - 1 hour

Grade/Subject: 9th-12th grade English/Language Arts

Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, Students will be able to:

1. Describe the particular struggles of enslaved women regarding sexual violence.
2. Analyze and discuss how state law, location, and social & ethical norms shaped each woman's story.
3. Compare and contrast two similar yet distinct stories.

Necessary Materials

- [Celia \(Florida\)](#) from Enslaved.org
- [Celia \(Missouri\)](#) from Enslaved.org
- Laptop or Tablet (for web searches)
- Printout or projection of partner questions
- Note-taking materials

Vocabulary

- Manumission
- Free Person

ELA Common Core Standards

- **For 9th-10th Grades:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.9

Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.

- **For 11th-12th Grades:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.8

Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.9

Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Activities/Procedures

- 1) Assign half of the class to read the story of Celia from Florida (Group 1). Assign the other half to read the story of Celia from Missouri (Group 2). Instruct students to also read through the links/citations at the bottom of each Story for more contextual information.
- 2) Pair each student from Group 1 with a partner from Group 2; each pair should have one student who read about Florida Celia and one student who read about Missouri Celia.
 - a) Alternatively for older students: have everyone read both stories prior to class session, and assign partners randomly.
- 3) Using a laptop or tablet and their note-taking materials, students should work together to discuss and write down answers to the following questions (these notes can be turned in at the end of the activity):
 - a) What was the legal outcome of each Celia's particular situation? How were these outcomes similar or different?
 - b) In the case of Florida Celia, how did the legal status of Free Persons affect her own standing during her trial, even though she was enslaved?
 - c) Also in the case of Florida Celia, how are money, location, and the manumission of an enslaved person connected? How does this connection ultimately harm Celia and her family following the trial?
 - d) In the case of Missouri Celia, how did her status as an enslaved person affect her lawyer's ability to defend her during trial?
 - e) In the case of both women, the judges ultimately had a major impact on the trial outcomes. How did the judges influence each Celia's eventual fate? What do we make of how the judges acted compared to more lenient/empathetic juries?

Hint: consider what legal and social shifts were taking place at the time in each state.

- f) In the case of both Celias, it became clear during trial that they were victims of sexual violence: Missouri Celia had been raped by her master throughout her teen years, and Florida Celia was a victim of incest by her father. Why was the acknowledgement of their horrific experiences not enough to save either woman?
-
- 4) Bring the class back together for a full-group discussion. You can choose pairs to share their answers to each question, allowing students to respond to each other's answers and offering clarifications/corrections where appropriate.
-

Lesson Creators

LaTara McLemore, University of Michigan