



Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Race and Religion in the Antebellum United States

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Abstract:

During the antebellum period, religion in the United States gained several layers of complexity as abolitionists and plantation owners both laid claim to Christianity, constructing conflicting arguments from Biblical text. Within black communities, African traditions combined with Christianity to create a uniquely American spirituality rooted in resilience and refuge, and independent black churches became foundations for resistance and demands for change.

This lesson analyzes these four lenses of religion leading up to the Civil War. Lesson materials draw on a variety of primary and secondary sources (included below), in addition to excerpts from Sue Monk Kidd's novel, "Invention of Wings," about the relationship between an enslaved woman in South Carolina and a plantation owner's daughter turned Quaker abolitionist.

Lesson Outline:

- **Lesson Goal:** SWBAT evaluate the role of religion in the debates about slavery and in the lived experience of enslaved people.
- **Essential Question:** How was religion both a source of oppression and resistance during the antebellum period?
- Homework: Students read four 1-2 page excerpts from "Invention of Wings", each touching on one of the religious lenses for the lesson:
 - 1. Christianity as a defense of slavery
 - 2. Independent black churches
 - 3. African diaspora traditions
 - 4. Christianity of the abolitionists
- Do Now: Teacher writes or prints key quotes from HW excerpts on poster paper. Students participate in a gallery walk, writing reactions, questions and comments on post-it notes and placing on the poster paper. Brief student-led discussion (One student is assigned to

each poster. They take turns offering ideas for class discussion taken from the post-it notes. The student who speaks calls on the next student speaker). (10 min)

- Jigsaw: Students break into four “expert” groups, each focusing on a different religious lens. (25 min)
 - Step 1 - Students read and annotate 3 new sources (1 primary source text, 1 secondary source text, and 1 piece of art). Students answer brief comprehension questions about each.
 - Step 2 - Students write 2 key takeaways and 2 remaining questions about their group’s focus area.
 - Step 3 - Students return to “home” groups. There is one student in each group representing information from each focus area. Students write down takeaways and questions for all the focus areas.
- Exit Ticket/ FA (Padlet responses): What do students *need* to know about religion in the United States in the years leading up to the Civil War? Be sure to include both examples of oppression and resistance.
 - Use Padlet responses for short class discussion the next day.

Teacher Resources:

Part I: Excerpts from Sue Monk Kidd’s “The Invention of Wings”:

- *Christianity as a defense of slavery* - p. 38-40

In this passage, Sarah Grimke reacts to a sermon at her church expounding on Ephesians 6:5 (“Slaves be obedient to them that are your masters”). The passage also describes the physical layout of the church, with enslaved people sitting on the upper balconies and white families arranged in order of precedence below.

- *Independent black churches* - p. 161-163 & p. 224

In these passages, Hetty attends the independent African Methodist Church in Charlestown and becomes acquainted with Denmark Vesey’s liberation theology. She later becomes involved in Vesey’s attempted slave revolt

- *African diaspora traditions* - p. 51-53

In this passage, Hetty’s mother shares a folk story passed down from her grandmother, who was kidnapped and sold into slavery from Africa. The passage hints at the importance of ancestors and the spirit’s attachment to physical place, in addition to African influence on the religion of enslaved people in the United States.

- *Christianity of the abolitionists* - p. 317-319

In this passage, Sarah describes her writing process as she and her sister Angelina prepare the first of their pamphlets speaking out against slavery.

Part II: Do Now Resources:

During the Do Now, students will react to teacher-selected quotes from each of four excerpts from Sue Monk Kidd's "Invention of Wings" (see above in Part I for suggested quotes). Reactions might include questions, reactions and connections to prior knowledge, other classes, books, etc. Students will circulate around the room, posting reactions on the relevant poster paper. Teachers should select four students to choose responses and facilitate a short discussion. A graphic organizer for students to track the discussion is included in the student lesson materials.

- *Christianity as a defense of slavery* - p. 38-40

"Slaves, I admonish you to be content with your lot, for it is the will of God! Your obedience is mandated by scripture. It is commanded by God through Moses. It is approved by Christ through his apostles, and upheld by the church. Take heed, then, and may God in his mercy grant that you will be humbled this day and return to your masters as faithful servants."

- Reverend Hall speaking to the congregation after a shoe flies out of the upper balconies where slaves sit during services (Kidd, 40).

- *Independent black churches* - p. 161-163 & p. 224

"Denmark sailed up from his chair like Elijah in his chariot. 'The Lord has spoken to me,' he cried out. 'He said, set my people free. When your name is written in the Book, you're one of us and you're one of God's, and we'll take our freedom when God says. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let it be afraid. You believe in God, believe also in me'" (Kidd, 224).

- *African diaspora traditions* - p. 51-53

"Your granny-mauma found us a spirit tree. It's just a oak tree, but she call it a Baybob like they have in Africa. She say Fon people keep a spirit tree... Your granny-mauma wrapped the trunk with thread she begged and stole. She took me out there and say, 'We gon put our spirits in the tree so they safe from harm.' We kneel on her quilt from Africa, nothing but a shred now, and we give our spirits to the tree. She say our spirits live in the tree with the birds, learning to fly. She told me, 'If you leave this place, go get your spirit and take it with you,'" (Kidd, 53).

- *Christianity of the abolitionists* p. 317-319

"... It's the South that must be reached," I said. "... We're Southerners... we know the slaveholders, you and I... We can speak to them... not lecture them, but appeal to them"...
"I sometimes thought of Father as I wrote and the brutal confession he'd made at the end. *Do you think I don't abhor slavery? Do you think I don't know it was greed that kept me from following my conscience?*" (Kidd, 317-318).

Part III: Other Resources

Christianity as a defense of slavery:

- Josiah Priest's "Bible Defense of Slavery" (1853)
<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/christn/chesjpat.html>
- "Slave Bible from the 1800s omitted passages that could incite rebellion" NPR, 12/9/18
<https://www.npr.org/2018/12/09/674995075/slave-bible-from-the-1800s-omitted-key-passages-that-could-incite-rebellion>
- "How Christian slaveholders used the Bible to justify slavery", Time, 2/23/18, Noel Rae
<https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/>
- Museum of the Bible (Washington D.C.) exhibit on the slave Bible
<https://www.museumofthebible.org/exhibits/slave-bible>
- "How Antebellum Christians justified slavery" - JSTOR Daily, 6/27/18, Matthew Wills
<https://daily.jstor.org/how-antebellum-christians-justified-slavery/>

Independent black Christian churches

- "The Black Church", *PBS's American Experience*, Marilyn Fellowes
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/godinamerica-black-church/>
- The Church in the Southern Black Community: a database of primary sources and articles compiled by the University of North Carolina
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/index.html>
- PBS "Africans in America" documentary lesson plan (includes primary sources from Richard Allen and Denmark Vesey)
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/tguide/3tgfocust.html>
- Teaching History's profile of Denmark Vesey
<https://teachinghistory.org/history-content/beyond-the-textbook/24126>
- "Denmark Vesey and the history of Charleston's 'Mother Emanuel' Church", NPR, Kat Chow, 6/18/15
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/18/415465656/denmark-vesey-and-the-history-of-charleston-s-mother-emanuel-church>
- "The Story of Denmark Vesey", The Atlantic, June 1861, Thomas Higginson
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1861/06/denmark-vesey/396239/>
- "Denmark Vesey, forgotten hero", The Atlantic, Dec. 1999 (includes excerpts from The Atlantic's 1861 article on Denmark Vesey)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/12/denmark-vesey-forgotten-hero/305673/>
- Full text of Denmark Vesey's trial, 1822
https://archive.org/stream/dveseytrial/DV1_djvu.txt

African diaspora traditions:

- "What Beyoncé teaches us about the African diaspora in 'Lemonade'" - PBS News Hour, 4/29/16
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/what-beyonce-teaches-us-about-the-african-diaspora-in-lemonade>
- "African spirituality and the power of religious reclamation", African American Intellectual History Society, Emerald Rutledge, 10/9/17
<https://www.aaihs.org/african-spirituality-and-the-power-of-religious-reclamation/>

- “The Cultural History of Yoruba”, Articulate Show Magazine, Kate Chisolm, 2/15/18
<https://www.articulateshow.org/articulate/the-cultural-legacy-of-yoruba>
- “Joe Carter: The Spirituals”, On Being with Krista Tippet, 5/9/03
<https://onbeing.org/programs/joe-carter-the-spirituals-aug2018/>
- “Wade in the Water”, NPR series on African spirituals
<https://www.npr.org/2019/06/20/726113095/wade-in-the-water-an-introduction>
- “African American Spirituals”, Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/>

Christianity of the abolitionists:

- The Abolition Seminar (a database of primary sources compiled by the Library Company of Philadelphia and a team of teachers from another NEH institute)
<https://www.abolitionseminar.org/documents/>
- “Testimony of Sarah M. Grimke on Slavery” - 1839
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=283

Additional resources, primary texts, and other lesson materials may be found on the following pages.

For information about the Religious Worlds of New York summer institute for teachers, and more resources to enrich your teaching on religious diversity, see: www.religiousworldsnyc.org.

Race & Religion in the Antebellum U.S.

Name: _____

Section: _____

Essential Question: How was religion both a source of oppression and resistance during the antebellum period?

Objective: SWBAT evaluate the role of religion in the debates about slavery and in the lived experience of enslaved people.

Part 1: Do Now – Gallery Walk & Discussion Tracker

For our Do Now, you will be reacting to quotes from the homework readings on posters throughout the room. During the discussion that follows, track interesting comments and questions below:

Jot down a comment you find interesting or surprising:
Make a connection between the discussion and something you remember from earlier in this course:
A question I still have is...

Part 2: Religion & Slavery Jigsaw

Last night, you read excerpts from “Invention of Wings” covering each of these topics. Now, you will become an expert on one topic. **CIRCLE** the expert group you have been assigned:

1. Christianity as a defense of slavery
2. Independent black churches
3. African diaspora traditions
4. Christianity of the abolitionists

Step 1 - Read and annotate new sources. Answer the questions about each source.

Step 2 - Write 2 key takeaways and 2 remaining questions about your group’s topic in the first graphic organizer below.

Step 3 - Return to your home group. You will take turns sharing out information and writing down take takeaways in second graphic organizer.

While in your expert groups, fill in the following:

Takeaway (<i>Everyone should know...</i>)	Explanation + Text Evidence
1.	
2.	
<p>Two Remaining Questions</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	

While in your home groups, fill in the following:

Topic	2 Takeaways (<i>Everyone should know...</i>)
Christianity as a defense of slavery	
Independent black churches	

Topic	2 Takeaways (<i>Everyone should know...</i>)
African diaspora traditions	
Christianity of the abolitionists	

Part 3: Exit Ticket - *Respond in 3-5 sentences on Padlet:*

What do students *need* to know about religion in the United States in the years leading up to the Civil War? Be sure to include at least one example of oppression and one example of resistance.

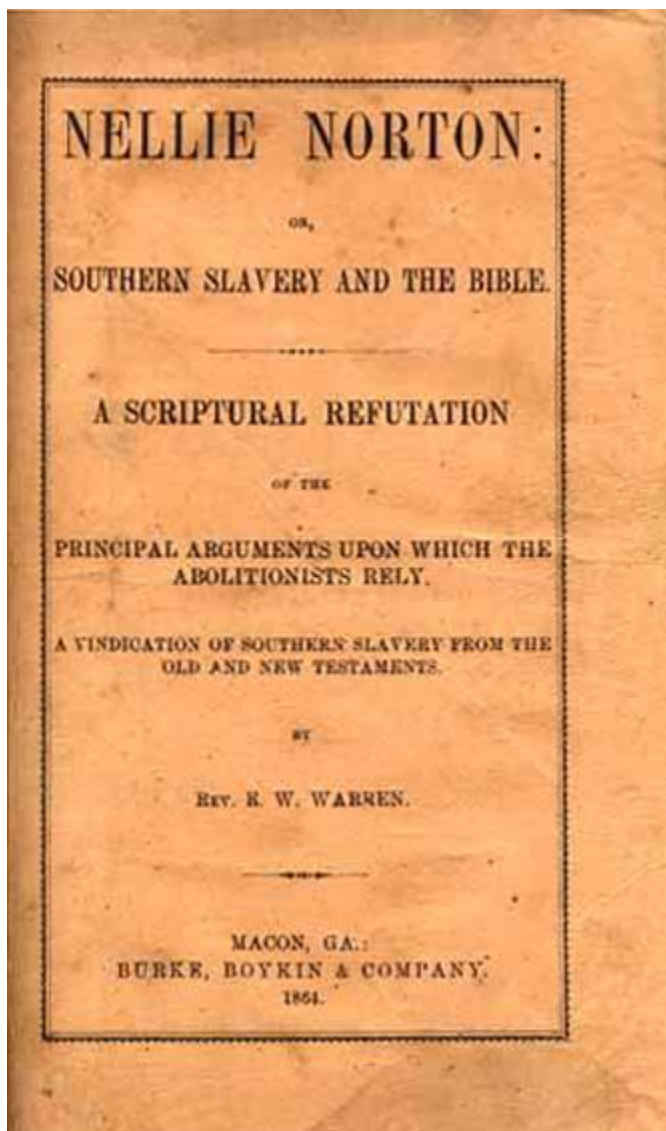
Annotate:

- CIRCLE words you don't know
- ??? in margin
- _____ main ideas/ answers to Qs

Group A: Christianity as a defense of slavery

Last night, you read p. 38-40 in Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings."

Doc A: "Nellie Norton: Or, Southern Slavery and the Bible: A Scriptural Refutation of the Principal Arguments upon which the Abolitionists Rely. A Vindication of Southern Slavery from the Old and New Testaments" - by Rev. Ebenezer Warren, 1820



1. "Refutation" and "vindication" are two key vocab words to understanding this book title. Use context clues. What do these words mean? Put the title into your own words.

2. Make an inference: what is Reverend Warren's purpose in writing this book? How do you know? CIRCLE the specific parts of the book's title page that provide evidence.

3. Choose a quote from the homework reading that provides an argument or idea Rev. Warren might use in this book. Write the quote below.

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/warren/warren.html>

Doc B: “How Christian slaveholders used the Bible to justify slavery” - Time, Noel Rae, 2/23/2018

*During the period of American slavery, how did slaveholders manage to balance their religious beliefs with the cruel facts of the “peculiar institution”? As shown by the following passages — adapted from Noel Rae’s new book *The Great Stain*, which uses firsthand accounts to tell the story of slavery in America — for some of them that rationalization was right there in the Bible.*

Out of the more than three quarters of a million words in the Bible, Christian slaveholders—and, if asked, most slaveholders would have defined themselves as Christian—had two favorites texts, one from the beginning of the Old Testament and the other from the end of the New Testament. In the words of the King James Bible, which was the version then current, these were, first, Genesis IX, 18–27:

“And the sons of Noah that went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole world overspread. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.”

Despite some problems with this story—What was so terrible about seeing Noah drunk? Why curse Canaan rather than Ham? How long was the servitude to last? Surely Ham would have been the same color as his brothers?—it eventually became the foundational text for those who wanted to justify slavery on Biblical grounds. In its boiled-down, popular version, known as “The Curse of Ham,” Canaan was dropped from the story, Ham was made black, and his descendants were made Africans.

The other favorite came from the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, VI, 5-7: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” (Paul repeated himself, almost word for word, in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians.)

The rest of the Old Testament was often mined by pro-slavery polemicists for examples proving that slavery was common among the Israelites. The New Testament was largely ignored, except in the negative sense of pointing out that nowhere did Jesus condemn slavery, although the story of Philemon, the runaway who St. Paul returned to his master, was often quoted. It was also generally accepted that the Latin word *servus*, usually translated as servant, really meant slave.

Even apparent abuses, when looked at in the right light, worked out for the best, in the words of Bishop William Meade of Virginia. Suppose, for example, that you have been punished for something you did not do, “is it not possible you may have done some other bad thing which was never discovered and that Almighty God, who saw you doing it, would not let you escape without punishment one time or another? And ought you not in such a case to give glory to Him, and be thankful that He would rather punish you in this life for your wickedness than destroy your souls for it in the next life? But suppose that even this was not the case—a case hardly to be imagined—and that you have by no means, known or unknown, deserved the correction you suffered; there is this great comfort in it, that if you bear it patiently, and leave your cause in the hands of God, He will reward you for it in heaven, and the punishment you suffer unjustly here shall turn to your exceeding great glory hereafter.”

Bishop Stephen Elliott, of Georgia, also knew how to look on the bright side. Critics of slavery should “consider whether, by their interference with this institution, they may not be checking and impeding a work which is manifestly Providential. For nearly a hundred years the English and American Churches have been striving to civilize and Christianize Western Africa, and with what result? Around Sierra Leone, and in the neighborhood of Cape Palmas, a few natives have been made Christians, and some nations have been partially civilized; but what a small number in comparison with the thousands, nay, I may say millions, who have learned the way to Heaven and who have been made to know their Savior through the means of African slavery! At this very moment there are from three to four millions of Africans, educating for earth and for Heaven in the so vilified Southern States—learning the very best lessons for a semi-barbarous people—lessons of self-control, of obedience, of perseverance, of adaptation of means to ends; learning, above all, where their weakness lies, and how they may acquire strength for the battle of life. These considerations satisfy me with their condition, and assure me that it is the best relation they can, for the present, be made to occupy.”

Reviewing the work of the white churches, Frederick Douglass had this to say: “Between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ; I therefore hate the corrupt, slave-holding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason but the most deceitful one for calling the religion of this land Christianity...”

<https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/>

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1. How did slaveholders use the story of Noah's sons, Canaan and Ham, to justify slavery?
2. The article quotes two bishops providing defenses of slavery. Choose one and write a one sentence summary.
3. What is the main idea of the Frederick Douglass quote at the end of the article?

Annotate:

- CIRCLE words you don't know
- ??? in margin
- _____ main ideas/ answers to Qs

Group B: Independent black churches

Last night, you read p. 161-163 & p. 224 in Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings."

Doc A: Testimony from the Trial of Denmark Vesey, 1822

Historical Context: Denmark Vesey was a slave carpenter in Charlestown, South Carolina, who purchased his freedom after winning a local lottery. After becoming free, Vesey took on leadership roles in Charlestown's independent black church, the African Methodist Church. He also organized a slave revolt, which was revealed in 1822 before it could be put into action. In the aftermath, Vesey and dozens more of Charlestown's free black and enslaved population were arrested, tortured, and executed.

The passage below includes excerpts from testimony given against Denmark Vesey during his trial.

At the head of this conspiracy stood Denmark Vesey, a free negro; with him the idea undoubtedly originated. For several years before he disclosed his intentions to any one, he appears to have been constantly and assiduously engaged in endeavoring to embitter the minds of the colored population against the white. He rendered himself perfectly familiar with all those parts of the Scriptures, which he thought he could pervert to his purpose; and would readily quote them, to prove that slavery was contrary to the laws of God; that slaves were bound to attempt, their emancipation, however shocking and bloody might be the consequences, and that such efforts would not only be pleasing to the Almighty, but were absolutely enjoined, and their success predicted in the Scriptures.

His favorite texts when he addressed his own color were Zcchariah, chapter 14, verses 1, 2 and 3, and Joshua, chapter 4, verse 2-11; and in all his conversations he identified their situation with that of the Israelites...

What is the main idea of this first section? (One sentence) Underline references to religion.

This was about the time that the African congregation, (so called from its being composed wholly of persons of colour and almost entirely of blacks,) was formed, and their Church built... of which Vesey had been a member, and of which his principal associates, Gullali Jack, Monday, Ned and Peter, were also member... It was also about this time, that class meetings of the coloured people had become so common as they now are; each class having a coloured preacher or leader as they were termed, named by the Minister of the Church to which he belonged; at which meetings, held usually at night in some retired building, avowedly for religious instruction and worship, no white person attended.

That inflammatory and insurrectionary doctrines, without any direct proposal for such an attempt, were inculcated at these meetings or some of them, was positively proved; and further, that they were to be used as places of rendezvous and rallying points, for communicating to all, the exact night and hour, on which the first blow [of the revolt] was to be struck. The great impropriety of allowing meetings of any kind to be held solely by slaves, and at such times and places, must forcibly strike every reflecting mind.

What is the main idea of this first section? (One sentence) Underline how the person testifying describes the African church.

The African congregation above mentioned was not only composed altogether of coloured persons, but their Ministers were also coloured ; and were stated to have been regularly ordained Bishops and Ministers of the Gospel. The influence which such men and class leaders must necessarily acquire over the minds of the ignorant blacks is evident ; and if a disposition exists in them to obtain for their own colour and themselves, the freedom and privileges enjoyed by the whites, by enlisting into their cause perverted religion and fanaticism, that desperation is kindled in their hearers, the consequences of which are but too well known.

Is it to be wondered at that, under all the foregoing circumstances, an attempt to create an insurrection should be contemplated !

Source: https://archive.org/stream/dveseytrial/DV1_djvu.txt

1. What did Denmark Vesey tell his followers about Christianity's messages regarding slavery? Which group from Scripture did he most identify with?

Annotate:

- CIRCLE words you don't know
- ??? in margin
- _____ main ideas/ answers to Qs

Group C: African diaspora traditions

Last night, you read p. 51-53 in Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings."

Doc A: "The Cultural Legacy of Yoruba" - Articulate Magazine, 2/15/2018

Even if you've never heard of the Yoruba, it's likely that you've been exposed to their culture. Whether it was the hypnotic white body paint in Beyoncé's "Sorry" video or Paul Simon's incorporation of Santeria symbolism in his Broadway musical, *The Capeman*, this rich culture has fascinated countless artists throughout the years. And though outsiders may never understand the full scope of Yoruba, we can explore the roots of its pervasive influence on the mainstream.

To start with, "Yoruba" is a pretty broad term. It refers to a West African ethnic group, as well as their language and religious philosophy. Yorubaland, the historic area the group inhabited, stretched across the southwest area of Nigeria and small parts of Benin and Togo. Today, people of Yoruba descent make up one of the largest populations in not just modern-day Nigeria, but the African continent as a whole.



What's even more interesting is how deep these roots go. Despite the fact that the Yoruba had no written language until 1852, their strong tradition of oral history tells us that they were present in West Africa as early as the 7th century. And, by the 11th century, the Yoruba had become the dominant cultural force in what is now Nigeria.

The Yoruba religion has been described as a folk philosophy, a system of belief developed to give meaning to the physical and spiritual worlds. It

includes a divine creator, which is represented by a trinity. But, since the Yoruba believe that the human mind can't quite fathom an all-powerful god, they also look to lesser deities—know as Orishas—which represent facets and qualities of the divine.

While many cultures without a written language have been lost to time, the tight-knit communities, oral tradition, and veneration of ancestors and elders that define the Yoruba have enabled their beliefs to survive in the face of much persecution. Indeed, these practices were so deeply ingrained in the Yoruba people that, even through the brutal transatlantic slave trade, the traditions never died—they merely transformed. For example, slaves under Spanish colonial rule in Cuba were forbidden from openly worshipping Orishas by their Catholic slave owners. But they discovered a clever way around that problem.

After noticing similarities between their deities and the pantheon of Christian saints, the displaced Yoruba realized they could honor Orishas on days of celebration for their Catholic counterparts. This allowed them to practice their religion in plain sight, without fear of retribution.

“Lucumí” was the name given to this new faith by its practitioners. But the Spanish settlers mocked this so-called “worship of saints” with a title that may be more familiar to those outside the religion: Santería.

<https://www.articulatshow.org/articulate/the-cultural-legacy-of-yoruba>

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1. Define *Yoruba*. In which part of Africa does this culture originate? What different aspects of this culture does the word *Yoruba* refer to?
2. Summarize *Yoruba* religious beliefs. Be sure to include a definition of *orishas*.
3. How did Santería develop among enslaved communities working to keep *Yoruba* traditions alive?
4. Make a connection between this reading and the excerpt you read from “The Invention of Wings.” Specifically consider the story Hetty’s mother tells about the spirits of Hetty’s ancestors.

Doc B: "The Winds of Orisha" - Audre Lorde, 1970

The poet Audre Lorde uses imagery from Yoruba traditions in her poem. While reading, ANNOTATE with three connections to "The Invention of Wings" and Doc A.

I

This land will not always be foreign.
How many of its women ache to bear their stories
robust and screaming like the earth erupting grain
or thrash in padded chains mute as bottles
hands fluttering tracts of resistance
on the backs of once lovers
half the truth
knocking in the brain like an angry steampipe
how many
long to work or split open
so bodies venting into silence
can plan their next move?

Tiresias took 500 years they say to progress into woman
growing smaller and darker and more powerful
until nut-like, she went to sleep in a bottle
Tiresias took 500 years to grow into woman
so do not despair of your sons.

II

Impatient legends speak through my flesh
changing this earth's formation
spreading
I will become myself
an incantation
dark raucous many-shaped characters
leaping back and forth across bland pages
and Mother Yemonja raises her breasts to begin my labour
near water
the beautiful Oshun and I lie down together
in the heat of her body my truth becomes stronger
Shango will be my brother roaring out of the sea
earth shakes our darkness swelling into each other
warning winds will announce us living
as Oya, Oya my sister my daughter
destroys the crust of the tidy beaches
and Eshu's black laughter turns up the neat sleeping sand.

III

The heart of this country's tradition is its wheat men
dying for money
dying for water for markets for power
over all people's children
they sit in their chains on their dry earth
before nightfall
telling tales as they wait for their time
of completion
hoping the young ones can hear them
earth-shaking fears wreath their blank weary faces
most of them have spent their lives and their wives
in labour
most of them have never seen beaches
but as Oya my sister moves out of the mouths
of their sons and daughters against them
I will swell up from the pages of their daily heralds
leaping out of the almanacs
instead of an answer to their search for rain
they will read me
the dark cloud
meaning something entire
and different.

When the winds of Orisha blow
even the roots of grass
quicken.

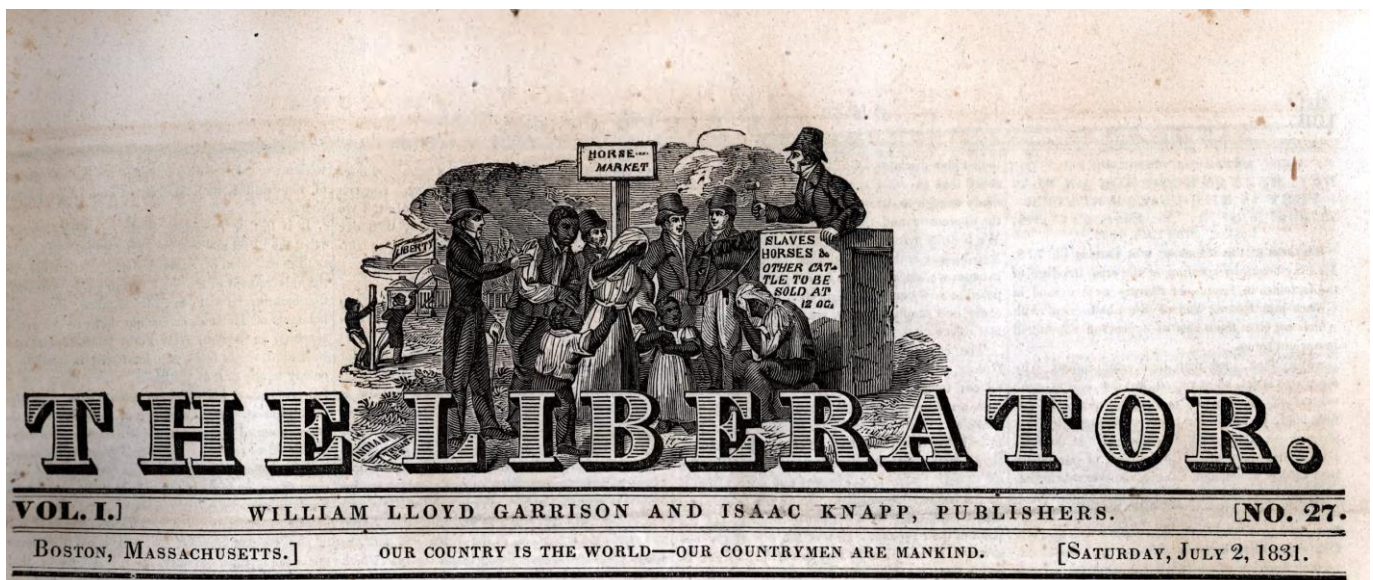
Annotate:

- CIRCLE words you don't know
- ??? in margin
- _____ main ideas/ answers to Qs

Group D: Christianity of the abolitionists

Last night, you read p. 317-319 in Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings."

Doc A: "The Liberator" - William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, 1831



<https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/Islandora%3A2880>

1. This was the heading for every copy of the abolitionist newspaper, "The Liberator." What do you see on the heading? Jot down images, words and phrases that you notice.

2. Using evidence from your first answer, what is "The Liberator's" message?

Doc B: "Testimony of Sarah M. Grimke on Slavery" - 1839

Historical Context: *Angelina Grimke Weld (1805-1879) and her sister Sarah M. Grimké (1792-1873) were the daughters of a South Carolina Supreme Court justice and slaveholder. Angelina and Sarah left South Carolina to join the Quakers and speak out against slavery. Later, they became supporters of the early women's rights movement, speaking convincingly about the important public role women had in speaking against injustices such as slavery.*

Angelina Grimke Weld gave this speech in Philadelphia a few days after her marriage to fellow abolitionist Thomas Weld. The wedding ceremony's black minister and mixed-race guest list scandalized the city, and a mob gathered outside Philadelphia Hall as abolitionists gathered for Angelina's speech. The crowd would burn the hall down that evening.

The great men of this country will not do this work [to end slaver]; the church will never do it. A desire to please the world, to keep the favor of all parties and of all conditions, makes them dumb on this and every other unpopular subject... therefore God, in his wisdom, employs them not to carry on his plans of reformation and salvation. He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to overcome the mighty.

What is the main idea of the first paragraph? (One sentence) Underline religious phrases and imagery.

As a Southerner I feel that it is my duty to stand up here to-night and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it -- I have seen it. I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing: I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences, and its destructiveness to human happiness... I thank the Lord that there is yet life left enough to feel the truth, even though it rages at it -- that conscience is not so completely seared as to be unmoved by the truth of the living God....

What is the main idea of the second paragraph? (One sentence) Underline religious phrases and imagery.

Women of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. Men may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right: it is only through petitions that you can reach the Legislature. It is therefore peculiarly your duty to petition. Do you say, "It does no good?" The South already turns pale at the number sent. They have read the reports of the proceedings of Congress, and there have seen that among other petitions were very many from the women of the North on the subject of slavery. This fact has called the attention of the South to the subject. How could we expect to have done more as yet? Men who hold the rod over slaves, rule in the councils of the nation: and they deny our right to petition and to remonstrate against abuses of our sex and of our kind. We have these rights, however, from our God. Only let us exercise them: and though often turned away unanswered, let us remember the influence of importunity upon the unjust judge, and act accordingly. The fact that the South look with jealousy upon our measures shows that they are effectual.

What is the main idea of the third paragraph? (One sentence) Underline religious phrases and imagery.

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2939t.html>

1. What is Angelina's message to people in the North who might say they do not own slaves, and therefore slavery is not their problem?
2. What is Angelina's message to women, who might say they cannot vote, and therefore they have no power to end slavery?
3. How does Angelina use Christianity to make an argument against slavery?