Lesson Plan: Antebellum Freedom

Primary Sources:

Philip Gowen Petition, June 16, 1675
Thomas Newton Freed Francis Drake, May 23, 1791
William Breedlove Petition, 1863

Understanding Goal:

Slavery in America evolved over time.

Investigative Question:

What is manumission? What paths did enslaved African Americans have toward manumission? How much did their freedom rely on others?

Standards Addressed:

Virginia Standards of Learning:

VS.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of life in the Virginia colony by
a) explaining the importance of agriculture and its influence on the institution of slavery;

USI.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the factors that shaped colonial America by
c) describing colonial life in America from the perspectives of large landowners, farmers, artisans, women, indentured servants, and slaves;

CE.1 The student will develop the social studies skills citizenship requires, including the ability to
a) examine and interpret primary and secondary source documents;
d) distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information;
e) review information for accuracy, separating fact from opinion;
f) identify a problem and recommend solutions;
g) select and defend positions in writing, discussion, and debate.

VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to
h) interpret the significance of excerpts from famous speeches and other documents.

VUS.2 The student will describe how early European exploration and colonization resulted in cultural interactions among Europeans, Africans, and American Indians (First Americans).

VUS.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major events during the first half of the nineteenth century by
c) describing the cultural, economic, and political issues that divided the nation, including slavery, the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements, and the role of the states in the Union.

National History Standards

Era 4 – 2d (Grades 7-12) Evaluate how enslaved African Americans used religion and family to create a viable culture and ameliorate the effects of slavery.

Overview:

This lesson will help students understand how American slavery evolved from Old World institutions to become involuntary race-based servitude, created to support a culture unique to America's agricultural South.

Length of Activity:

One class, or 50 minutes of a block class

Materials Needed (copies for all)**:**

- Philip Gowen Petition, June 16, 1675
- Thomas Newton Freed Francis Drake, May 23, 1791
- William Breedlove Petition, 1863
- Written Document Analysis Sheet – 3 copies for each student
- Historical Marker Assignment

Teacher Actions:

The teacher may want to read the background information found within the Library of Virginia's *Shaping the Constitution* Web site on the Thirteenth Amendment.

1. Preactivity bell ringer: Hand students a half sheet of paper on which is printed the question: "What is the difference between an indentured servant and a slave?" and have them answer it.
2. Discuss this question as a class. Introduce the idea of race; ask the students from what races were American indentured servants? How was this different from the race of slaves? Discuss how the legalization of slavery in America was a gradual process that grew from the necessity of cheap labor for the agricultural economy of the South. Help the students discover the definition of manumission. Write it on the board and underline mission, ask them what the word "transmission" means. As an example: Students were given vaccines to prevent the transmission of disease in school. Next ask what it means to do something "manually" or to drive a "manual" transmission. Manumission is "letting go" of someone yourself (by hand). Tell the class that you are going to examine three different manumission petitions that illustrate how the "rules" for black labor evolved over time.
3. Handout 3 copies of the NARA Written Document Analysis worksheet (http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf) to each student. Review the instructions and questions with the class. Project each of the primary sources onto the screen one at a time beginning with the Philip Gowen petition. This will be a difficult one for the students and require help from the teacher. Have the students fill out their form as you discuss the document. Discuss the following questions. After reading the document, is Mr. Gowen a slave or an indentured servant? How do you know? According to Mrs. Beazlye's will, what was Philip Gowen to receive after his eight years of indenture? In what ways could Mr. Charles Lucas have "compelled him to serve three yeares longer" than his indenture was contracted?
4. Proceed to Francis Drake's manumission petition and complete another Document Analysis sheet. How is Drake's situation different from Gowen's? For what reasons do you think a slaveholder would release his slaves?
5. Finish with William Breedlove's petition. How does Breedlove's situation differ from Gowen's and Drake's? Of what crime was he convicted? What was his punishment? What

reasons are given in this petition for the pardon of Breedlove? Why might he receive a pardon before a field slave?

Analysis:

Discuss the dates of the documents the students have considered. They range from the 17th century to the 19th century. Have them examine a timeline for laws pertaining to slavery. How did the institution evolve between Gowen's petition and Breedlove's? What actions were taken by the national government? What actions did the Virginia Assembly take? Students should walk away with a better understanding of the growth and evolution of the institution.

Next, have the students use the information from their analysis sheets, class discussion, and the documents to create a historic marker for Philip Gowen, Francis Drake, or William Breedlove. Before beginning, have students review the Web site for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) and the Historical Marker Program at http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/index.htm . From there they can go to the DHR's Historic Highway Marker Search Site and find markers in the local area, or in their area of choice at http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/hiway_markers/hwmarker_search.htm . What is the criteria for having a marker erected? Based on this criteria, who of the three, Gowen, Drake, or Breedlove, is most deserving of a marker? This can be a written response, and will prepare them for creating their own marker, using the instructions on the worksheet.

Historical Marker Assignment

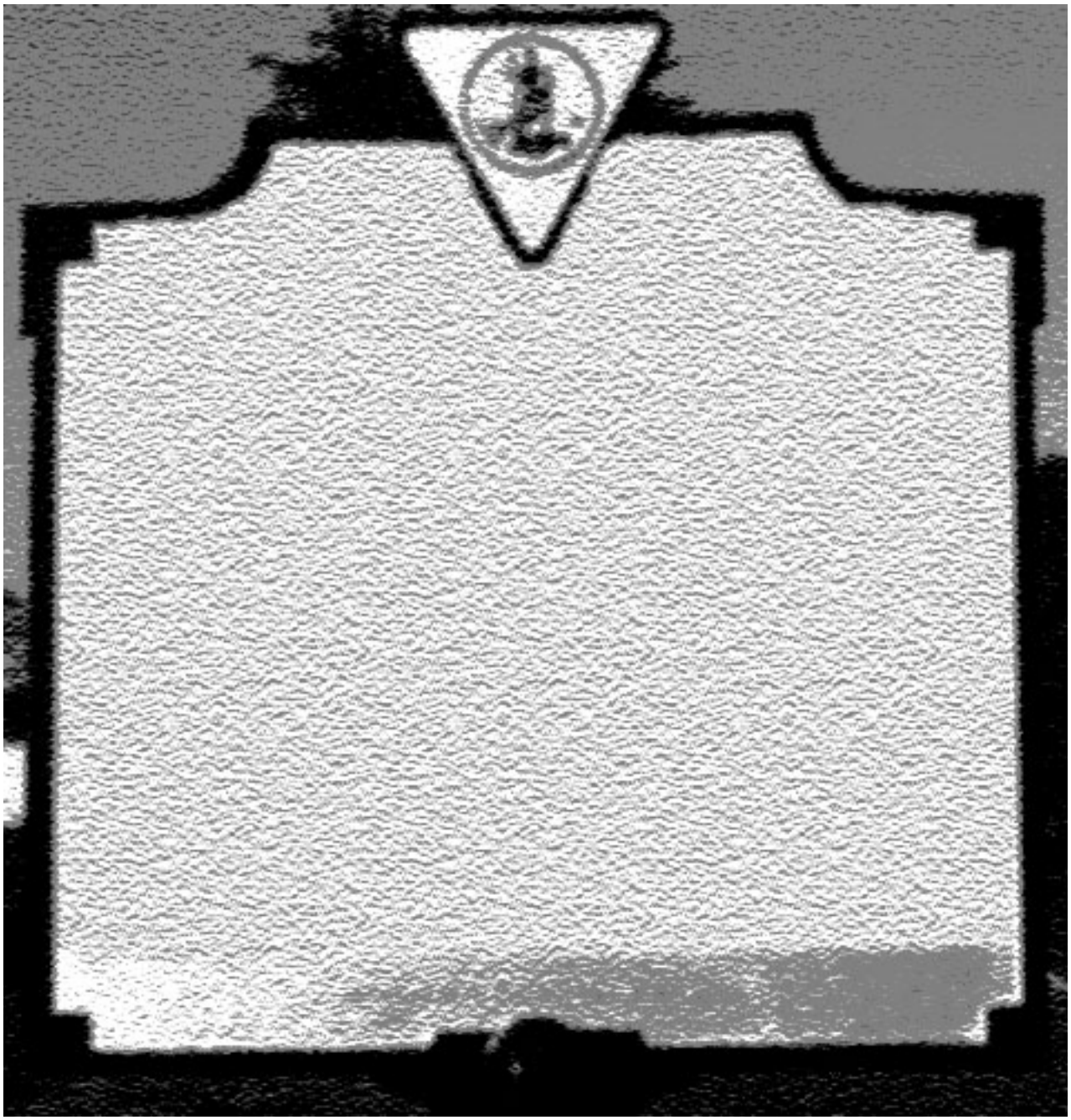
You have been selected to lead a committee for Virginia's Department of Historic Resources. The DHR has enough money in the budget to create one new Historic Marker. It is your job to decide which of the three men discussed most deserves a marker. Use your primary sources, document analysis sheets, and the class discussion to make your decision. Below is a brief timeline of legislation and legal cases in Virginia that diminished the freedoms of African Americans. This should help you put each man's accomplishments in perspective and decide that is most deserving of the historical marker.

• 1639—African Americans are excluded from being required to have firearms.
• 1640—John Punch, an African American indentured servant, is sentenced to a life of servitude after being caught running away from his master. The two white men who were with him only received one additional year on their indentures.
• 1643—Owners are taxed on African American women, but not on white women laborers.
• 1662—The law declares that a person's status depends on the status of the mother. This meant that children born to enslaved women would be slaves for life, under the law.
• 1667—The law declares that being a baptized a Christian does not change a person's status as a servant or slave.
• 1669—A new law is established that said it was not a punishable crime if a master killed a slave in the process of "correcting" that slave.
• 1705—The law provides that "Negro, Mulatto, and Indians slaves" were considered to be property, or real estate, under the law. This same statute also declared that all Africans were considered to be slaves.

Once you have decided–design your marker! What should it say?

Your marker should include a letter to the left of the inverted triangle and a number to the right.

My letter: _____ My number: _____

A title in bold and caps across the top, underneath the letter and number:

A brief description of the person, place, or event being honored. Draft your brief description below (no more than 103 words is standard), then transfer it to your marker on the back of this paper.