



PRESTWICK HOUSE

Activity Pack

INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL

BY HARRIET JACOBS



Copyright © 2011 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938. 1-800-932-4593. www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to use this unit for classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.

Item No. 308632

Written by Becca Challman

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Slave Narrative Genre****Objective:** Exploring the slave narrative genre**Activity**

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is a memoir that speaks primarily in the defense of women, which is why many classify it as feminist literature. However, it is foremost an example of a slave narrative. Slave narratives, whether written by men or women, share many identifying characteristics: they recount the slave's journey from captivity to freedom; they depict the abuse suffered by slaves; they promote literacy as the key to freedom and a higher quality of life; they are heavily informed by religious faith and hope; and they are almost always introduced, or endorsed, by reputable white acquaintances who verify the narrative's authenticity.

Use the Internet or other resources to locate at least six slave narratives published in book form. Then, complete the following chart by listing the author, the title of the narrative, the year and city in which it was published, who, if anyone, endorsed it, how it was received, and how critics view it today. We have done the first one for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I – V**Timeline**

Objective: Arranging events in chronological order for context

Activity

The first five chapters of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* contain a lot of information about the events leading up to Linda Brent's unfortunate position in Dr. Flint's home. Some of the details from her childhood can be confusing. A timeline may help you clarify events.

Draw a line on a sheet of paper, and list the following incidents in chronological order. The first one is correct. Use it and information from the text to determine the approximate order of events and the approximate time span between them.

- Linda Brent is born.
- Her mistress dies.
- Her mother dies.
- Her brother William is born.
- Her uncle Benjamin is sold at age 10.
- Her father dies.
- She is taught to read and spell.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters VI – X**Twitter Summary**

Objectives: Synthesizing information from the text
Writing a “Twitter” summary

Activity

There is a lot going on in the Flint household in Chapters VI-X. For example, Harriet turns sixteen, Dr. Flint steps up his sexual harassment, and Mrs. Flint’s jealousy intensifies.

“Twitter” is an Internet website that allows people to share thoughts with their friends, family, and other interested “followers” in 140 characters or less. The character limit forces people to communicate their ideas without using unnecessary words and details. Imagine you are Harriet, and you are going to write a “Twitter” summary about events in the Flint home.

Write about at least five events from this section in chronological order. Each post must consist of 140 characters or less. Remember, spaces count as characters, so restrict each summary to essential information only.

The following is an example:

Chapter VI: Dr. says I am to sleep in his room with his child. Creepy desperate wife said no but is now stalking me. I don’t know who is worse.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters VI – X**Advice Column****Objective:** Interpreting and responding to events from the text**Activity**

Linda describes how the influences of slavery made her “prematurely knowing, concerning the evil ways of the world.” The corrupting influence of slavery robs her of her innocence. By the time she is fifteen years old, she must make some very tough decisions. Rather than sacrificing herself to Dr. Flint, Linda begins a relationship with Mr. Sands. He is a young, white, unmarried lawyer. It is obvious that she feels guilty about her relationship. She writes, however, that she knew what she did, and she did it with deliberate calculation. If she must make an impossible choice, she at least wants to be with a man who does not control her and may even purchase her freedom.

Imagine that you are Linda, and you have not yet made this decision. You are struggling with what to do and want objective advice from someone who is not involved in the situation—an advice columnist for the local newspaper. Write a letter from Linda to the columnist explaining your dilemma and asking for advice. Then, as the columnist, write a reply offering your best advice. Remember, you know only what Linda has written to you. You do not know how events turn out.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XI – XV**Changing Perspective**

Objectives: Exploring point of view and its effect on the narrative
Writing a character monologue

Activity

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is written in the first person. Linda tells the story from her own point of view, which provides the reader with her thoughts, emotions, and interpretation of events. How do you think Linda's story would differ if it were told from another perspective? For example:

Passage from the text: The doctor came to see me the next day, and my heart beat quicker as he entered. I never had seen the old man tread with so majestic a step. He seated himself and looked at me with withering scorn. My children had learned to be afraid of him.

Passage rewritten from Dr. Flint's perspective: I went to see her the next day, and I could tell she was excited by my presence. She was in awe of me. I took the seat she offered me and, dismissing her, examined her children closely and kindly. She had obviously taught them to fear me. What a pity.

Rewrite two significant passages in Chapters XI – XV from another character's perspective. Use what you know about the characters' personalities to rewrite the events, as you believe the characters would view them.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XVI – XX**Newspaper Article**

Objectives: Making inferences
Incorporating facts and ideas into a newspaper article

Activity

The primary purpose of a news story is to inform and educate readers by providing factual information. News stories answer the questions: *Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How*. This information is usually contained in the first paragraph, with the details completing the rest of the story.

Human-interest stories concentrate less on the facts and do not always place the 5Ws, 1H in the beginning. These types of stories focus more on what will resonate with the newspaper's readers. Human-interest stories deal with subjects the editors feel their readers want to explore. Their purpose is to entertain.

Editorials are written to express a writer's opinion of a specific event or topic. The 5Ws, 1H may or may not be included in the editorial. Editorials present information, but in a biased way. They are meant to persuade readers or to enlighten them about a specific issue.

Imagine that you are a reporter for a newspaper, and you have been asked to write an article about an event that occurred in Chapters XVI – XX. You must include the facts presented in the text and make inferences about other information that may be relevant to the situation. Feel free to include interviews with characters in the book or characters that you have created, but make sure you stay true to the story. Be sure to give your article a headline.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXI – XXV**3-D Model of the Garret**

Objective: Analyzing information from the text for practical application

Activity

In Chapter XXI, Linda describes her very small garret space, which is to become her hiding place for the next seven years. It is built above a shed and covered only by shingles. It is nine feet long and seven feet wide. The highest part is three feet high, and it slopes down abruptly to the loose board floor. There is no window or any other way to let in light or fresh air. There is a single concealed trap door from which to enter and exit along with a bed on the floor. Linda carves out a tiny one inch-by-one inch hole from which to peer down at her children when they are outside.

Use Linda's detailed description to recreate a three-dimensional model of the garret.

Your model should be built to scale. One inch may equal one foot or two feet, for example. You may use any materials that are suitable for constructing a model.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXVI – XXX**Awareness Campaign**

Objectives: Making a persuasive argument
Creating an advertising campaign

Activity

Linda's Uncle William, who is so close to her in age that they are more like siblings, uses his visit to the North with his master Mr. Sands to escape. At first the family is devastated, especially since Mr. Sands has promised to free William in five years. Sands seems convinced the abolitionists lured William away and that he will regret his decision and return to him. William eventually writes to reassure his family that he is overjoyed to finally realize his childhood dream of freedom.

The abolitionists were activists who used a variety of methods to promote the end of slavery. Imagine that you are an activist, and you want to raise awareness about a cause you believe in. Brainstorm ideas and then provide detailed specifications for the following:

- the type of advertising medium you will use (e.g., newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, TV, Internet, etc.)
- the text, illustrations or graphics, and a memorable tag line
- the celebrity spokesperson to appear in the campaign to raise visibility

After you have written the details of your advertisement, write a short explanation for the choices you made and why your advertisement will be effective in promoting awareness of your cause.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXXI – XXXV**Resume**

Objectives: Extracting information from the text
Writing a resume

Activity

Linda's primary concern after reaching New York is finding a job. She has no references from the families she has served in the South. She is fortunate enough to hear about a woman named Mrs. Bruce, who is looking for a live-in caregiver for her baby. After interviewing Linda, Mrs. Bruce hires her on a trial basis. Soon, she realizes that Linda's nurturing skills, intelligence, and honesty make her perfect for the job.

Imagine that Linda does not wish to remain with Mrs. Bruce for long, and wants to look for a more suitable job. Create a resume for Linda that highlights her skills and accomplishments, while down-playing the fact that she is a fugitive slave. Follow the template that we have provided.