UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit Length	Five-six 50-minute lessons and one field trip
Grade Level(s)/Subject(s)	Grades 3-4 Social Studies and English Language Arts
Unit Overview	This unit introduces students to an often mischaracterized, intentionally neglected chapter of Black history in the Adirondacks of New York State: the free Black people who established farms in the area known as Timbuctoo, which formed the impetus for the famed abolitionist John Brown to move to the area with his family. Timbuctoo was a name given to a portion of the three thousand 40-acre parcels granted to free Black families by abolitionist Gerrit Smith as a way to extend suffrage rights, following a New York State law requiring Black men to have $250 worth of land in order to vote. Students will first learn the broader context for this story of Black resistance through an arts-integrated study of the picture book *Born on the Water* by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson, illustrated by Nikkolas Smith. By beginning their unit with a picture of the full lives, culture, and joys of the ancestors of the narrator of *Born on the Water*, students will develop a sense of historical empathy with people who were kidnapped and enslaved. Students will then be guided to understand, in an age-appropriate and emotionally regulated way, the implications of the Middle Passage and the system of slavery and its many violences. They will then come to understand that, even after slavery was outlawed in New York State, its legacy persisted with laws that suppressed the Black vote and allowed slave catchers to kidnap free Black people for a profit. Studying the Black voting rights and land justice movement of Timbuctoo will pick up the theme of Black resistance and cultural preservation that is introduced in *Born on the Water*, and will also open up a discussion of what histories are told, and which are suppressed. As Amy Godine recounts in *The Black Woods: Pursuing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier*, Alfred L. Donaldson's *History of the Adirondacks*, published in 1921 and viewed as definitive for at least eighty years, dismissed the movement thus: "The attempt to combine an escaped slave with a so-called Adirondack farm was about as promising of agricultural results as would be the placing of an Italian lizard on a Norwegian iceberg." Godine then cites a variety of similarly racist and dismissive accounts of Timbuctoo, from a biography of Gerrit Smith to the state historical society, that blame the failures of the movement on the essential character of the Black settlers. There will also be opportunities for further cross-curricular programming as we are able to use the grounds of John Brown's

	Farm to explore text and archaeological evidence that support the reframing of the story. Students will collaborate with their writing teachers to develop a proposed rewriting of the plaque about Timbuctoo at the Lake Placid Historical Society, which centralizes the narratives of John Brown and Gerrit Smith while incorrectly representing the Black settlers who moved north to the Adirondacks. *Educators who are unable to visit John Brown's Farm will have access, through this unit, to multimedia resources related to the farm, and/or may use this unit to inspire explorations of local sites of Black resistance and liberation in their own communities.* The study of *Born on the Water* will be the first part of a deeper dive on how we contextualize stories. Some questions that will be asked will be: ➔ *How can we examine different ways of telling a true story? What genres speak to the past? How do they do so, and how do they do so differently?* ➔ *How do you tell your own story? What skills do you need to do so? What information/artifacts do you need to talk about your own story?* ➔ *Who can we write biographies about? What information do we need to know before we can start? Where can we find this information?* ➔ *What do we know about the story of people in the Adirondacks? Who has told it in the past? Who tells it now? Who are the players, and whose voices were amplified and whose were decentralized? By what mechanisms did that happen? What kind of information is available? Who wrote it? What does that context do to a story?* ➔ *How are people in the Adirondacks memorialized? What does that tell us about them, and about the people who did the memorializing? Whose voices are overly present, and whose are missing? Why did this happen?* ➔ *How do the historical organizations in the Adirondacks talk about the historical and current inhabitants of the park?*
Objectives & Outcomes	Students will… ➔ Gain a deeper understanding of the importance of how a story is told and the impact of the narrator on the narrative. ➔ Develop a deeper sense of historical empathy with people from our local historical narrative, and will learn how to use that understanding in order to analyze other parts of our local historical narrative.

	➔ Practice their skills in identifying different parts of a story. ➔ Develop and submit a proposal to a local historical society.
Standards	As this material is designed to be delivered across several different grades, the authors have identified excerpts from the New York State Education Department's Lifelong Practice of Readers and Writers in order to identify the broader skill development supported by this unit, which include: ➔ Reading to think, write, speak, and listen to understand. ➔ Reading often and widely from a range of global and diverse texts. ➔ Persevering through challenging, complex texts. ➔ Reading to make connections (to self, other texts, ideas, cultures, eras, etc.) ➔ Writing for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure. ➔ Persevering through challenging writing tasks. ➔ Enriching personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary through reading, writing, and communicating with others. ➔ Strengthening writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
Unit Resources	Resources used with students: ➔ *Born on the Water* by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson, illustrated by Nikkolas Smith ➔ *Bread for Words: A Frederick Douglass Story* by Shana Keller ➔ "Black Communities in the Adirondacks"	*Searching for Timbuctoo* video from PBS Learning Media (8:09) ➔ Clips from *Searching for Timbuctoo* video from PBS Learning Media ➔ "What Are Primary Sources" interactive video by KidCitizen (approx. 2 min) ➔ Artifacts found on John Brown's Farm from Consider the Source New York ➔ Letter from John Thomas to Gerrit Smith ➔ "The Lyman Epps, Sr. Homestead" by RJ Lara for Upstate Historical ➔ Letter from James McCune Smith to Gerrit Smith, printed in Lapham's Quarterly ➔ Primary source packet Background resources for educators:

	➔ Teaching Hard History: Grades K-5 from Learning for Justice ➔ *The Black Woods: Pursuing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier* by Amy Godine
Performance Task	Students will collaborate with their writing teachers to develop a proposed rewriting of the plaque about Timbuctoo at the Lake Placid Historical Society Museum, to be drafted individually and revised collectively into one proposal. The plaque currently centralizes the narratives of John Brown and Gerrit Smith while incorrectly representing the Black settlers who moved north to the Adirondacks as unprepared and unskilled.
Assessment/Evaluation	➔ A rubric for a proposal to the Lake Placid Historical Society will be provided to students, and used as a tool for analysis as to the strength of their proposal. ➔ Students will participate in a series of reflection conversations with their classroom teachers and with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professional.

DAILY LESSONS AND RESOURCES

Day 1: Guided reading of *Born on the Water*, "Questions" through "And They Danced"

Essential Questions
➔ Where does the story of Black people in America begin? ➔ What is an ancestor? ➔ What are some symbols people use to represent their family background? ➔ How is a family story passed down, or a family heirloom, different from a flag or crest or family tree?
Lesson Materials & Resources
➔ *Born on the Water*, "Questions" through "And They Danced" ➔ Teacher-provided story and/or family heirloom ➔ Pictures of flags, family trees, and family crests
Lesson Activities
1. The lesson begins with the teacher sharing a family story and/or an heirloom or object that is meaningful in representing their family. Then the teacher reads "Questions" through "And They Danced" in *Born on the Water*, stopping to offer context and raise questions along the way: "Questions" ➔ What is ancestral land? What is an ancestor? ➔ What do you notice about the girl and the paper in front of her? ➔ What do you think is different about her versus her classmates, who "can count back many generations"? "What Grandma Tells Me" ➔ Why is it important to use the term "enslaved people" versus "slaves"? ➔ Why is it important that the White Lion arrived before the Mayflower? ➔ Where do you think this picture takes place? What do you notice about the picture? ➔ What is the significance of, "Before they were enslaved, they were free"? "They Had a Language" through "And They Danced" ➔ Why does the grandmother choose to tell the narrator about the Kimbundu language and the words they spoke? ➔ What is the significance of "They knew how to mix the old with the new"? 2. Teacher shows representations of family trees, flags, and family crests. Discuss: How is this kind of representation different from a story or an heirloom? 3. Now invite students to respond by writing a family story they were told or drawing an object that represents something about their family. When they share these stories and drawings, encourage them to

elaborate on what this story or drawing says about their family or what it means to them.

Students may also be invited to ask elders to tell them other family stories, or to bring in an heirloom that's important to them.

Day 2: Guided reading of *Born on the Water,* "Stolen" through "How to Make a Home"

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
➔ What are migration and forced migration? ➔ What is the Middle Passage?
Lesson Materials & Resources
➔ World map ➔ *Born on the Water*, "Stolen" through "How to Make a Home" ➔ Connections protocol by Gene Thompson-Grove for the Harmony Education Center ◆ Educators may use this protocol to support students in processing the sections of *Born on the Water* read during this class period, in addition to the journaling activity below. ➔ Teaching Hard History: Grades K-5: Essential Knowledge 13 ◆ Background resource for educators
Lesson Activities
1. Begin with a discussion of why families move from one place to another. Draw from the personal experiences of teachers and students. Recall the discussion of family origins and ancestry. 2. Introduce the terms migration, immigration, and forced migration. Access students' prior knowledge of colonization to introduce the idea that European countries made money by exploiting the resources of other places, both in the Americas and in Africa, and these countries fought over these resources. 3. Identify Angola, the former kingdom of Ndongo, and Point Comfort, Virginia on the map. Identify Portugal and England. 4. Preview the reading by telling students that this part of the story is sometimes very sad and difficult, may be hard to understand, and may bring about difficult emotions. Tell students that there will be an opportunity to process these emotions. Be mindful of how a students' identity might affect how they will feel about these pages, and consider giving students the option to request a pause. 5. Read "Stolen" through "How to Make a Home," taking time to answer student questions and emphasizing the resistance of the kidnapped people. Discuss the refrain, "Ours is no immigration story." Give students opportunities to notice what is in the pictures: the colors, facial expressions, art on the walls of the ships. During the reading of "Point Comfort" and "Tobacco Fields," emphasize that slavery in the Americas was more than just work without pay, but also treating people as property, justified by racism. Finish with "How to Make a Home," and ask students to interpret the line "we will make this home." How? Emphasize that this did not mean slavery was bearable. 6. Students will then respond in their reading notebook to one of the following journal prompts. They may choose to illustrate their writing.

- ➔ The Ndongo people were good at many things. Choose one of these things and write about it using details from the text. Illustrate your writing.
- ➔ How is this story different from immigration stories we have read?
- ➔ Write about the trip across the ocean and life on the White Lion.
- ➔ What gave the people hope?

Day 3: Resistance: Finish *Born on the Water* and read *Bread for Words: A Frederick Douglass Story*

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
➔ What is resistance? ➔ How did enslaved people resist their circumstances through creativity and perseverance? ➔ Who is Frederick Douglass?
Lesson Materials & Resources
➔ *Born on the Water*, "How to Make a Home" through end ➔ *Bread for Words: A Frederick Douglass Story* by Shana Keller ➔ Chart paper and markers
Lesson Activities
1. Begin by finishing the class reading of *Born on the Water*. 2. Define resistance, and ask students to interpret the sentence, "For 250 years, the biggest resistance of all was that the people kept living." 3. Next, introduce the book *Bread for Words*. Read the book aloud, raising the following questions as you go: ➔ Why do you think Daniel is taught to read and write and speak, but Frederick isn't? ➔ Interpret the lines, "I walked like them. I talked like them. I walked and talked exactly like them. I showed them I could. Is that why I was sent to Baltimore, far away from my brothers and sisters?" ➔ What does Mr. Auld mean when he says, "If you teach Freddy how to read, there would be no keeping him?" ➔ When Freddy says, "My chains had been broken," what does he mean by "chains?" Is this literal or symbolic? 4. After the reading, put students into small groups and give each group chart paper and markers. Give them the following tasks, one at a time: ➔ List the different strategies Freddy uses to learn to read. ➔ Make an educated guess about the meaning of the last sentence: "My chains had been broken." How did learning to read help Freddy break his chains? 5. Wrap up with a group discussion of how Frederick Douglass's story is an example of resistance. Homework: Ask students to bring an object with them into the next lesson. The object should be something that tells a story about their life in some way. Let students know they will be asked to pass the object around the room and to share the story it tells.

Day 4: Introducing Timbuctoo

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
➔ What is Timbuctoo? ➔ What led up to Gerrit Smith's land grant? ➔ What would it have been like to migrate to North Elba in the mid-19th century and establish a farm? ➔ What is a primary source? ➔ How can we use objects and artifacts to learn about life in North Elba in the mid to late 1800s?
Lesson Materials & Resources
Resources: ➔ This lesson is adapted from "What is a Primary Source? Focus on Artifacts Found at John Brown's Farm" by Patricia McCormick for Consider the Source New York. The lesson includes: ◆ Images of artifacts found at John Brown's farm ◆ "What Are Primary Sources" interactive video by KidCitizen (approx. 2 min) ◆ Clips from *Searching for Timbuctoo* video from PBS Learning Media ◆ "Analyze an Artifact or Object" worksheet from the National Archives ◆ "Analyze a Photograph" worksheet from the National Archives ➔ "Black Communities in the Adirondacks" | *Searching for Timbuctoo* video from PBS Learning Media (8:09) Materials: ➔ Projector to show primary sources ➔ Objects brought in by students (see prior lesson homework)
Lesson Activities
1. Begin by providing background about Timbuctoo using the PBS Learning Media resource on Timbuctoo. 2. Facilitate the lesson "What is a Primary Source? Focus on Artifacts Found at John Brown's Farm" by Patricia McCormick for Consider the Source New York. Start by showing students the video "What Are Primary Sources" and have students demonstrate how to examine an object/artifact with their own personal object. Students have learned to: ➔ comment about the object's physical appearance: size, shape, color, texture, or design ➔ determine what is familiar or unfamiliar about the object: come up with possible uses for it 3. Students work in pairs or small groups to pass and show their objects as classmates observe and predict the object's importance. The owner of the object can explain how this object tells their story. 4. How do historians find objects at historical sites? Show items found at the site, or project photos of items. Teachers can introduce Dr. Hadley Kruczek-Aaron and how she searches for objects that help to tell the story of Timbuctoo using the PBS video *Searching for Timbuctoo* (1:05-3:00, 39:15- 40:00, 52:00-53:10).

5. Students can work in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class. The teacher will select one artifact at a time and have students observe and infer or make educated guesses about the item. They will use the artifact analysis to help guide their observations. Teacher will point out indications of when this item was used and any additional information that is known about the artifact.

Repeat the procedure above using other objects found at John Brown Farmhouse, or project images of them (glass bottle, chips of china, bullet casing, photograph).

6. Facilitate a wrap-up discussion about the experience, and how using objects and artifacts can help historians understand life for the settlers of Timbuctoo.

Extension activity: Compare the artifacts to objects used today. How are they alike and different? Create a Venn Diagram to show your conclusions.

Day 5: Using Primary Sources

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
➔ What can different types of primary sources tell us about Black New Yorkers' thoughts about home and their choices about homesteading in the Adirondacks in the mid-1800s?
Lesson Materials & Resources
➔ Projector to show different types of primary source documents ➔ Primary source packet ➔ "The Lyman Epps, Sr. Homestead" by RJ Lara for Upstate Historical ➔ Letter from John Thomas to Gerrit Smith from the Syracuse University Libraries Digital Collection ➔ Letter from James McCune Smith to Gerrit Smith, printed in Lapham's Quarterly ➔ Agreement between Albertine Appo and Lyman Epps, Jr.
Lesson Activities
1. Let students know that in this lesson, they will encounter an array of primary sources—photographs, letters, a sermon printed in a newspaper, a contract for the use of land—to learn more about how Black New Yorkers thought about the idea of home, the choices they made about Gerrit Smith's land grant, and what the lives of settlers would have been like. 2. Start by looking together, on the projector, at the extract from a sermon by Henry Highland Garnet, printed in *The North Star*. Link *The North Star* to Frederick Douglass (the newspaper's founder and editor) and tell students that Douglass featured Timbuctoo in the newspaper multiple times. Provide some context about Henry Highland Garnet's sermon as a kind of "send-off" for those who were leaving for North Elba. Read excerpts of the sermon aloud. Teacher will prompt students to reflect, using the framework: What we think/Why we think that (evidence)/What we are still wondering 3. Divide students into small groups, and give each group 1-2 primary sources to work with. Ask them to read/look at their primary source closely, and complete a chart with the same framework: What we think/Why we think that (evidence)/What we are still wondering 4. Come back together so every group can share their discoveries. Give time for everyone to look at/read each source before the groups share. 5. Emphasize the difference between the forced migration of slavery and the Middle Passage, and the agency Black New Yorkers could exercise in choosing to take possession of their 40 acres in the Adirondacks. 6. Activity: Ask students to write a diary entry from the point of view of a 19th century Black child whose parents were considering moving to North Elba. What conversations might they overhear? What might they be feeling?

Day 6: Competing Narratives, New Initiatives, and a Visit to John Brown Farm

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
➔ What stories are people telling about Timbuctoo now? ➔ What new initiatives are happening to commemorate this history? ➔ How should we remember Timbuctoo?
Lesson Materials & Resources
➔ Recent news articles: ◆ "John Thomas Brook name change made official" by Tim Rowland for Adirondack Explorer ◆ "The Black Woods" by Amy Godine for *Adirondack Life* ◆ "'Timbuctoo' historic marker to be unveiled" by Robin Caudell for *The Press-Republican* ➔ Text from Lake Placid Historical Society Museum ➔ Wikipedia article about Timbuctoo
Lesson Activities
1. Assign students to groups in which they read and summarize recent news articles, and then share out. 2. Circumstances allowing, students will visit John Brown Farm and see the exhibit *Dreaming of Timbuctoo*. They will take part in experiential learning activities to immerse themselves further in this story. Depending on the season, these activities might include planting seeds or harvesting vegetables that would have been grown by the settlers, an orienteering activity to experience what it would be like to find a plot of land in the woods, and a weaving activity making a rug out of recycled t-shirt material. 3. Fishbowl discussion: ➔ Was Timbuctoo a success or a failure? ➔ Is this an important story for people to be aware of? Why or why not? 4. Back in the classroom, students will look at accounts of Timbuctoo at the Lake Placid Historical Society and on Wikipedia and discuss whether these accounts are accurate. 5. As a culminating project, students will draft new language for the plaque and for the Wikipedia page. They can work individually or in small groups, review one anothers' drafts, and combine their work to form a proposed class revision to the plaque and Wikipedia page.