

African American History 400+ years of Resistance, Resilience, Power, and Pride

Today you will become smarter about the role the abolitionist movement played in resistance and revolts by examining the case of Anthony Burns and the Boston Slave Riot.

Standards/SJ Standards

History Social Science Standards CA

5.4 Students understand the political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.

6. Describe the introduction of slavery into America, the responses of slave families to their condition, the ongoing struggle between proponents and opponents of slavery, and the gradual institutionalization of slavery in the South.

Teaching Hard History Standards

Essential Knowledge 15

In every place and time, enslaved people sought freedom.

15.E Escape was difficult and rare, but some people managed to flee. Enslaved people who escaped were known as "fugitive slaves," and people chased after them, since there was often a cash reward for returning enslaved people who ran away.

15.F Enslaved people pursued freedom in many ways other than escape, including saving money to buy their freedom and their relatives' freedom, and turning to the courts to seek freedom.

Social Justice Standards

13. Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
14. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.
15. Students will identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

15.B Some enslaved people tried to rebel, but these actions were difficult and mostly unsuccessful because people in power wanted slavery to continue and had many more resources (including weapons) to put down rebellions.

There were other similar cases of Resistance like the Crosswhite affair....Anthony Burns & The Boston Slave Riot



Anthony Burns--Capture of A Fugitive Slave

This is a portrait of fugitive slave Anthony Burns, whose arrest and trial in Boston under the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 incited riots and protests by white and black abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. The portrait is surrounded by scenes from his life, including his sale on the auction block, escape from Richmond, Virginia, capture and imprisonment in Boston, and his return to a vessel to transport him to the South. Within a year after his capture, abolitionists were able to raise enough money to purchase Burns's freedom.



[Anthony Burns](#). Boston: R. M. Edwards, 1855. Wood engraving with letterpress. [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress. Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-90750 (3-9)

Bookmark this item: [//www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/abolition.html#obj15](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/abolition.html#obj15)

[PBS Video of Anthony Burns](#)

News report from the Library of Congress

[Full source from library of
congress](#)

dred men to do it. He urged the audience to wait until the day time : said that he knew the vaults of the banks in State street sympathized with them ; that the Whigs who had been kicked once too often sympathized with them. He told them that it was in their power so to block up every avenue that the man could not be carried off. He urged them not to balk the effort of to-morrow by foolish conduct to-night, giving the enemy the alarm. You that are ready to do the real work, be not carried away by indiscretion which may make shipwreck of our hopes.

The zeal that won't keep till to-morrow will never free a slave. (Cries of "No!")

Mr. Phillips seemed to have partially carried the feelings of the audience with him, when a man at the lower end of the hall cried out— "Mr. Chairman, I am just informed that a mob of negroes is in Court square, attempting to rescue Burns. I move we adjourn to Court square."

The audience immediately began rapidly to leave the hall, and most of them wended their way to Court square.

THE ATTEMPTED RESCUE AND LOSS OF LIFE.

The crowd moved from Faneuil Hall to the Court House, and halting on the East side endeavored to force the door on that part of the building, but failing in their attempt they ran round to the door on the West side opposite the Railroad Exchange, with loud cries that the fugitive was in that wing of the building, and there proceeded with a long plank, which they used as a battering-ram, and two axes to break in and force an entrance, which they did, and two of their number entered the building, but were quickly ejected by those inside. The battering-ram was manned by a dozen or fourteen men, white and colored, who plunged it against the door, until it was stove in. Meantime, several brickbats had been thrown at the windows, and the glass rattled in all directions. The leaders, or those who appeared to act as ringleaders in the melee, continually shouted : "Rescue him!" "Bring him out!" "Where is he!" &c. &c. The Court House bell rung an alarm at half past nine o'clock. At this point reports of pistols were heard in the crowd, and firearms, were used by those within the building, but whether loaded with ball or not we cannot say. During this struggle some thirty shots were fired by rioters, and the most intense excitement prevailed. The whole square was thronged with people. The Chief of Police, Taylor, was upon the ground with a full force of the Police, to stay the proceedings of the mob, now pressing still more reckless and threatening. Mr. Taylor pressed through the excited multitude, and, with great heroism, seized several men with axes in their hands, while breaking down the Court House door.

At the time the mob beat down the westerly door of the Court House, several men, employed as United States officers, were in the passage-way, using their endeavors to prevent the ingress of the crowd, and among the number was Mr. James Batchelder, a truckman, in the employ of Colonel Peter Dunbar, who, almost at the instant of the forcing of the door, received a pistol shot, (evidently a very heavy charge,) in the abdomen. Mr. Batchelder uttered the exclamation, "I'm stabbed," and falling backwards into the arms of watchman Isaac Jones, expired almost immediately. The unfortunate man resided in Charlestown, where he leaves a wife and one or two children to mourn his untimely fate.

At the time of forcing the door, and just as the fatal shot was fired, one of the rioters who was standing on the upper step, exclaimed to the crowd, "You cowards, will you desert us now!" At this moment, the exclamation of Mr. Batchelder, "I'm stabbed!" was heard, and the rioters retreated to the opposite side of the street.

In the meantime a white man rushed into the crowd and distributed several

meat axes, with the blades enveloped in the original brown papers. Two or three of these axes were subsequently picked up by the officers, and were deposited in the Centre Watch House.

After the arrests had been made, the crowd, although excited, remained quiet, but a new element was introduced by the arrival of a military company. The Boston Artillery, Captain Evans, were in the streets for their usual drill. When they marched up Court street, the mob at once supposed them to be the United States Marines, come to preserve order; and they were at once saluted with hisses, groans, and other marks of derision. Captain Evans seeing an excited crowd, and not knowing any thing of the disturbance, immediately marched his men down the West side of the Court House, and halted in the square, the crowd giving way. When the cause of the appearance of the company was explained, the crowd gave them three cheers, and the company departed.

A large force of officers were detailed for duty during the night outside the Court House, and throughout the whole evening and night an additional strong force was inside, fully armed for any emergency.

During this scene, the judges of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General of the Commonwealth, and the Sheriff of Suffolk were in the building awaiting the return of the jury in the Wilson case, who were to come in at 11 o'clock. Some members of the jury, who put their heads out of the window to see what was going on, were fired at, and the balls in one or two instances, struck quite near them. The windows of the Justice's court room were completely riddled by bullets discharged from without.

Marshal Freeman had a very narrow escape, a ball having struck the wall quite near him, while he was leading his men up to repulse the individuals who had broken in. His son was present and displayed great courage.

During these outrages upon the Court House, the Chief of Police summoned his men to protect the peace in the square, and with the assistance of only five men, rushed into the crowd before the door, and succeeded in arresting and bearing off to the watch house, the following persons :

A. G. Brown, Jr., American, 23 years of age, riotous conduct; John J. Roberts American, 25 years of age, breaking a gas lamp in the square; Walter Phinney, colored, 36, and John Wesley, colored, 26, riotous conduct; Wesley Bishop, 30, colored, disturbing the peace; Thomas Jackson, 42, colored; Henry Howe, 22; Martin Stowell, 30; John Thompson, 27, for disturbing the peace.

The Mayor was notified by his Chief of Police of the state of affairs, and he at once issued an order on Colonel Cowdin for two companies of artillery. At twelve o'clock the Boston Artillery, Captain Evans, and the Columbian Artillery, Captain Cass, came to the aid of the civil authorities. Their presence served to restore quiet, and Court Square was soon deserted by the rioters. Captain Evans's command was stationed in the City Hall for the night, and Captain Cass's company took quarters in the Court House. At half past twelve o'clock the square was deserted.

The Boston Artillery numbered 40 guns, and the Columbian Artillery appeared in full ranks.

During all this while there were three or four carriages standing in Court square, all of which were closely watched by the crowd, for fear that Burns might be secretly brought from the Court House, and suddenly driven off. At one time a number of persons started off from the square with the intention, as we infer from their language and remarks, to drum up assistance for further operations later in the night.

Prominent among the crowd were seen the leading speakers at the meeting in Faneuil Hall.

During the tumult, a number of our most respectable citizens called at the police office, and tendered their services to assist in maintaining peace and order. Their offer was accepted.

No determined effort was made by the mob to rescue the arrested persons, but

A, E, I, O, U, 1, 2 Use this approach to help read words with multiple syllables.

- 1.
2. Place an X under each A, E, I, O, U
3. Count the letters between the X's
4. Split between:
(X and X) example: jo/vi/al
(X and 1) example: te/na/cious
(1 and 2) example: bal/lad

Do not separate blends or word groupings that need each other.
ous, qu, bi, cl, dr, pr, cial, tion

Liberty
Freedom
Compromise

As a slave owned by Charles Suttle of Alexandria, Virginia, Anthony Burns had many privileges. He was allowed to hire himself out. He supervised the hiring out of four other slaves owned by Suttle. He had the freedom to take on additional jobs, as long as he paid his master a fee. He joined a church, where he became a preacher. He learned to read and write. Still, Anthony Burns was not content. At an early age he had learned that "there [was] a Christ who came to make us free" and felt "the necessity for freedom of soul and body." In 1854, he took steps to find freedom. While working in Richmond, Burns boarded a ship heading north, to the city of Boston.

Burns arrived in Boston in March -- a fugitive, but free. This new-found freedom, however, would be short-lived. Soon after his arrival he sent a letter to his brother, who was also a slave of Charles Suttle. Even though the letter was sent by way of Canada, it found its way into the hands of their master.

A few years earlier, Suttle could have expected little help from a northern state in recovering a fugitive slave. Nine states had personal liberty laws declaring that they would not cooperate with the federal government in the recapturing of slaves. But with the recent passing of the Fugitive Slave Act, a component of the Compromise of 1850, the law was on Suttle's side.

Suttle travelled to Boston to claim his "property," and on May 24, under the pretext of being charged for robbery, Burns was arrested. Boston abolitionists, vehemently opposed to the Slave Act, rallied to aid Burns, who was being held on the third floor of the federal courthouse. Two separate groups met at the same time to discuss Burn's recapture: a large group, consisting mainly of white abolitionists, met at Fanueil Hall; a smaller group, mostly blacks, met in the basement of the Tremont Temple.

The meeting at the Tremont Temple was quickly over. Those present decided to march to the courthouse and release Burns, using force if necessary. The meeting at Fanueil Hall lasted much longer. The group there debated the course of action. When the intentions of the Tremont Temple gathering were announced, however, the meeting abruptly ended. About two hundred citizens left Fanueil Hall and headed to the courthouse.

The crowd outside the courthouse quickly grew from several hundred to about two thousand. A small group of blacks, led by white minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson, charged the building with a beam they used as a battering ram. They succeeded in creating a small opening, but only for a moment. A shot was fired. A deputy shouted out that he had been stabbed, then died several minutes later. Higginson and a black man gained entry, but were beaten back outside by six to eight deputies.

Boston inhabitants had successfully aided re-captured slaves in the past. In 1851, a group of black men snatched a fugitive slave from a courtroom and sent her to Canada. Anthony Burns would not share the same fate. Determined to see the Fugitive Slave Act enforced, President Franklin Pierce ordered marines and artillery to assist the guards watching over Burns. Pierce also ordered a federal ship to return Burns to Virginia after the trial.

Burns was convicted of being a fugitive slave on June 2, 1854. That same day, an estimated 50,000 lined the streets of Boston, watching Anthony Burns walk in shackles toward the waterfront and the waiting ship.

A black church soon raised \$1300 to purchase Burns' freedom. In less than a year Anthony Burns was back in Boston.



click image for close-up

Two days after Anthony Burns' capture on May 24, 1854, notices such as this one began to appear on Boston's streets. The notice pictured here announces a meeting at Faneuil Hall, sponsored by the Boston Vigilance Committee, where a course of action would be determined.

A MAN
KIDNAPPED!

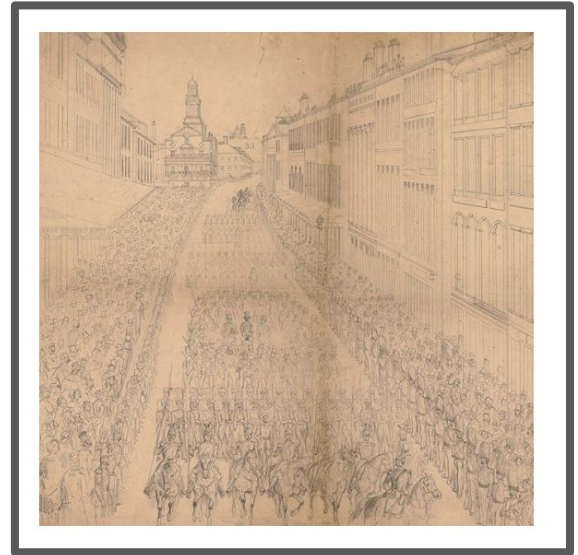
A PUBLIC MEETING AT
FANEUIL HALL!
WILL BE HELD
THIS FRIDAY EVEN'G,
May 26th, at 7 o'clock,
To secure justice for A MAN CLAIMED AS A SLAVE by a
VIRGINIA
KIDNAPPER!

And NOW IMPRISONED IN BOSTON COURT HOUSE, in
defiance of the Laws of Massachusetts, Shall be plunged into the Hell of Virginia Slavery by a Massachusetts Judge of Probate!

BOSTON, May 26, 1854

June 2, 1854: State Street, Boston, Massachusetts

In the aftermath of the assault, Marshal Watson Freeman, with the approval of President Franklin Pierce, called in federal troops to guard the courthouse and prevent another rescue attempt. Commissioner Edward G. Loring ruled in favor of Charles Suttle. On June 2, the federal government returned Burns to enslavement. While the presence of hundreds of soldiers marching Anthony Burns down State Street to Long Wharf prevented any attempt at a rescue, over 50,000 people lined the streets to protest. Black drapes hung on buildings and abolitionists strung up a coffin over the street with the word "Liberty" inscribed on it, signifying a funeral procession. The return of Anthony Burns sparked change in Massachusetts. As one prominent businessman stated, "we went to bed...compromise conservative Union Whigs and waked up stark mad abolitionists."^[7] By 1855, Massachusetts passed one of the strictest Personal Liberty Laws in the United States, making it nearly impossible to return another freedom seeker from the state.



Federal Marshals and soldiers escorted Burns down State Street in chains. (Credit: American Antiquarian Society)

[Interactive
timeline for
Anthony Burns](#)

PERSON

Leonard Grimes

[Boston African American National Historic Site](#), [New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park](#)

Leonard Andrew Grimes was a free Black, hack driver, abolitionist, Underground Railroad conductor, and Baptist minister who grew up in Loudoun County, Virginia before the Civil War. While in his twenties, Grimes witnessed the brutality of slavery first-hand on a journey through the South. The experience radicalized him and on his return, he committed himself to the task of assisting freedom seekers.

He became a hackman in the District of Columbia and discovered that his profession provided the perfect cover for helping fugitives escape from Virginia. He contributed to an unknown number of escapes before he was finally arrested and convicted of the crime in 1839. He served two years hard labor in the Richmond Penitentiary and paid a fine of \$100. After his release, Grimes and his family left Washington and settled first in New Bedford, Massachusetts and then Boston, where Grimes became minister of the [Twelfth Baptist Church](#). With scores of self-emancipated slaves among its members, Twelfth Baptist became known as "The Fugitive Slave Church." As minister, Rev. Grimes mobilized the Black community of Boston in their efforts against the [Fugitive Slave Law](#), raised funds for fugitive assistance, and participated in every major fugitive slave case including those of [Shadrach Minkins](#), [Thomas Sims](#), and [Anthony Burns](#). In addition to raising funds to purchase the freedom of members of his congregation, he also raised money and traveled to Baltimore to purchase the freedom of Anthony Burns.¹

During the Civil War, Grimes joined the chorus of Black leaders agitating for the enlistment of black soldiers and was rewarded in 1863 with the creation of the [54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment](#), one of the war's first African American regiments.



Cloze Passage to Build Comprehension

Network Conductor Fugitives Railroad

The Underground _____ was not a real railroad. It was a _____ of people, both black and white, who helped *enslaved people*, people forced to perform labor and services against their will, escape from their *enslavers*, people who enslave another person. This _____ was called "Underground" because it was top secret, and "Railroad" because terms like "_____" and "depot" were used as codes for helpers and safe places.

People who escape slavery were considered *fugitives*, because it was against the law to escape. Many _____ went to the northern United States and Canada where they could be free. Many of the fugitives that came to Michigan were enslaved in Kentucky.

1. Why was the trial of Anthony Burns important historically?
2. What was the role of Abolitionists in the resistance of the enslaved?

Fluency Practice Practice reading the text below with a partner. The goal is to read the text with 100% accuracy. The words in red are from the A, E, I, O, U, 1, 2 List.

The Underground Railroad was not a real railroad. It was a **network** of people, both black and white, who helped **enslaved** *people*, people forced to perform labor and services against their will, escape from their *enslavers*, people who enslave another person. This network was called “Underground” because it was top secret, and “Railroad” because terms like “**conductor**” and “depot” were used as codes for helpers and safe places. People who escape slavery were considered **fugitives**, because it was against the law to escape. Many fugitives went to the northern United States and Canada where they could be free. Many of the fugitives that came to Michigan were **enslaved** in Kentucky. Escaping was dangerous. Fugitives were determined, cautious, and courageous. They knew that the punishment was harsh if they were caught. Many **fugitives** that were caught were whipped, beaten or even made to wear chains. Traveling north was also very dangerous. Fugitives had to be careful not to be noticed, so many wore **disguises**. They traveled mostly by foot, but sometimes by horse, train or even fancy carriages. **Conductors** on the Underground Railroad helped them find routes and ways to escape to the north.

Writing Tips Use the following tips to complete your writing using the texts and the videos. Remember to **include what you learned** about the topic. Also, **share your thinking about what you learned**.

Using the texts and videos, write about

- Write what you learned about (topic) from the examples, the reading and the videos.
- Write what you will do with what you have learned.
- What thoughts or questions do you have after today's lesson?

Writing Structure- summary sentences

Sentence starters-

Today I learned about...

One thing I connected with was ...

This helped me understand

An example of resistance was

Read Aloud: Crown: An Ode to a Fresh Cut



[Did you know that barber shops were safe havens for black liberation activists?](#)

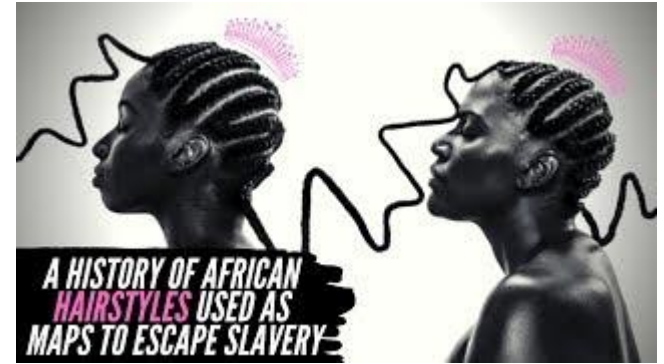
A Brief History of Black Hair

BLACK PEOPLE HAVE always communicated with their hair. In 2008, archaeologists in Tell el-Amarna, Egypt, an excavation site between Luxor and Cairo, [found human remains](#) from the 14th century B.C. with intact hairstyles. Some had more than 70 braids, with extra human hair worked into them to add length. These early weaves, likely styled with wax or grease, were attached in a way that allowed their owners to take their extensions off and update their hairstyles.

Later, in the 1500s, according to oral tradition, Black people who'd been enslaved in Africa braided rice and grains into their hair that they hoped to plant after arriving in then-unknown lands. In South America, legend holds that, in the 1600s, enslaved people plaited routes to freedom in their hair, carrying intricate maps right on their heads. After Reconstruction in the United States, Black women, no longer enslaved but nonetheless ostracized, began to fashion themselves after white people; in the early 1900s, Sarah Breedlove (a.k.a., Madam C.J. Walker) became [the first Black female millionaire](#) in part by selling hot combs and other products that enabled straight hair. At-home chemical relaxers, developed around the same time by the inventor [Garrett Morgan](#) and a drugstore staple by the 1950s, offered a more permanent solution.



Black HAIR, Braids, Locs and LOVE



[Teacher and Student Resource for Additional Research](#)