



CURRICULUM GUIDE

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL



WEEKSVILLE
HERITAGE CENTER



WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER

MAPPING COMMUNITIES: BLACK ENCLAVES



BLACK ENCLAVES IN NEW YORK CITY FROM 1825 TO 1950

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MAPPING COMMUNITIES: BLACK ENCLAVES

PAST

Participants will be able to identify Weeksville's impact on Brooklyn and New York City's history overall. They will understand why it's a space worth preserving, connect Weeksville and Seneca Village as thriving Black enclaves, and discuss key members of Weeksville's community.

PRESENT

Participants will be able to examine the current Weeksville Heritage Center site and discuss the site's current impact on the local community, as well as identify how the current mission of the organization is continuing the legacy of Weeksville's founding.

FUTURE

Participants will be able to think critically about the role that Weeksville Heritage Center currently plays in its community and discuss ways the Heritage Center interprets the importance and impact of this historic site.





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MAPPING COMMUNITIES: BLACK ENCLAVES

HAPPENINGS AT THIS TIME:

IN NEW YORK

- New York State Constitution was amended in 1821 that white men no longer needed any property to qualify to vote; however the restriction remained for Black men, who were not permitted to cast a ballot unless they owned \$250 worth of property.
- Slavery is abolished in 1827 in New York State
- The University of the City of New York (now known as New York University or NYU) is founded in 1831
- The first city rail line is built by the New York and Harlem Railroad in 1832
- A cholera epidemic arrives in New York City, leading to a massive flight from the city and as it occurred in poor neighborhoods, it is blamed on immigrant populations
- What was once the village of Brooklyn becomes the city of Brooklyn in 1834
- The Great Fire of 1835

IN THE UNITED STATES:

- The Second Great Awakening begins to take hold in the US in the 1830s
- Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia takes place in 1831
- The Indian Removal Act is signed into law and this law leads to the Trail of Tears in 1838
- Andrew Jackson is reelected as the 7th President of the United States in 1832 followed by Martin Van Buren as the 8th President in 1836
- Arkansas becomes a state in 1836

GLOBAL HAPPENINGS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

- Slavery is legally abolished in the British Empire in 1834
- The first European railroad is established in Belgium
- The Battle of the Alamo occurs in 1836
- Queen Victoria is announced as the Queen of Great Britain in 1837
- Louis Daguerre patents his camera in France
- The rebellion on the Amistad slave ship in 1839



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MAPPING COMMUNITIES: BLACK ENCLAVES

MORE:

As you can tell, the early 19th century, especially the 1830s, was a time of significant change but also innovation. You can learn about many of the happenings mentioned above in various institutions in New York City, such as: New York Historical Society (founded in 1804!), The National Museum of the American Indian, and the New York Transit Museum.

In the early 19th century, John Lefferts was one of the largest landowners in Kings County (where what we know as Brooklyn is located), with land tended by tenant farmers and African enslaved peoples. Once slavery is abolished in 1827 and Brooklyn was formed as a city, Leffert began selling off portions of his vast holdings, and Henry C. Thompson purchased a portion of this land. Henry C. Thompson was a leader in the community and within the African-American abolitionist movement in New York when he bought 32 lots from Lefferts. Over time, Thompson, a free Black man, advertised the lots in newspapers to sell those lots to other Black Americans, including James Weeks. James Weeks was working in the area as a stevedore (or a longshoreman/dock worker) and purchased two lots where he would build a house. About a year later, another Black man, Francis P. Graham, arrived and set down roots. Others would build alongside, and a new community, a town would be born -- Weeksville. By 1840, merely two years after James Weeks purchased his two lots, Weeksville, much like most of Brooklyn, was growing! Brooklyn in 1840 was a bustling city with active docks and ferries, rivaling New York City (just Manhattan at this point) in population and economic growth. Weeksville was a community of 27 families – notably, three were of European descent. The blossoming community prioritized not only owning land for Black men in the community to be able to vote but also prioritized education.





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MAPPING COMMUNITIES: BLACK ENCLAVES

MORE:

Weeksville's community opened Colored School No.2 in 1840, following the success in the launch of the African Free School (located in what is now the Fort Greene neighborhood) in 1827. Weeksville's school would attract Junius C. Morel, an abolitionist and writer for Frederick Douglass' The North Star. Morel would join the community in 1847 and move into the role of principal of Colored School No. 2.

The African Free School would later be renamed the Colored School No. 1 following the establishment of the Brooklyn public school system in the 1850s.

There were also women of Weeksville- important trailblazers in Weeksville's history.

ELIZABETH A. GLOUCESTER
One of the wealthiest Black women in America
(1817 - 1883)

SARAH GARNET
Educator, Activist,
and first Black Principal in the NYC School System
(1831-1911)



MARITCHA REMOND LYONS
LEADER AND INSPIRATION
(1848-1929)

SUSAN SMITH MCKINNEY-STEWARD
FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN DOCTOR
(1847-1918)





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LESSON 1: PAST

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Participants will be able to identify Weeksville's impact on New York City's history and why it is a space worth preserving, make connections between Weeksville and Seneca Village as thriving Black enclaves, and discuss key members of Weeksville's community.

MATERIALS/SPACE:

- Materials/Space:
- Plain White Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Access to the Internet

ALIGNING STANDARDS:

Next Generation Standards

RH2 (6-8)

RH7 (6-8)

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What do we already know about Weeksville?
- What was happening in the US during the 1830s?
- How were the 1830s a time of great change, but also innovation?
- What was happening globally in the early 19th century?
- Who was James Weeks, the founder of Weeksville?
- Who was John Lefferts and what role did he play development of Weeksville?

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

THINK: Using a piece of paper or download our worksheet to make a KWL chart on note what we already know about Weeksville Heritage Center.

VIEW: First watch [Uncovering New York City: Weeksville, Brooklyn | Secrets of the Dead | PBS on the history of Weeksville](#). After watching the video, please add more to your KWL chart in the learned section, in addition to expanding on your wonderings!

REVIEW: The [In Pursuit of Freedom project](#), specifically the Abolitionist Brooklyn section, to review some history of how Weeksville and Brooklyn came to be.

DISCOVER: Using a printed or digital version of our map of Weeksville, plot where James Weeks' house is. We will be using this map to continue our journey through the history and legacy of Weeksville.



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LESSON 1:

PAST *(continued)*



FUTURE WONDERINGS:

If interested in diving deeper into the origins of Weeksville and Brooklyn, consider exploring the following questions:

- Who is Henry C. Thompson and why did he get started in Black abolition?
- Why is Weeksville named after James Weeks?
- What is the current value of \$250 worth of land? What was the average annual wage for a Black man at that time?
- What careers were available to Black men at the time of 1830s/1840s in New York City?



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LESSON 1 RESOURCES

- Burrows, Edwin G, and Mike Wallace. 1998. Gotham. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Campanella, Thomas. 2020. BROOKLYN : The Once and Future City. S.L.: Princeton University Pres.
- “How the Free Black Community of Weeksville Rose in 19th-Century Brooklyn | National Trust for Historic Preservation.” n.d. Savingplaces.org. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://savingplaces.org/stories/how-the-free-black-community-of-weeksville-rose-in-19th-century-brooklyn>.
- “In Pursuit of Freedom | Brooklyn Abolitionists.” n.d. Accessed April 27, 2023. <http://pursuitoffreedom.org/>.
- Wellman, Judith. 2017. Brooklyn’s Promised Land : The Free Black Community of Weeksville, New York. New York: New York University Press.
- Williams, Keith. 2014. “Brooklyn’s Evolution from Small Town to Big City to Borough.” Curbed NY. July 24, 2014. <https://ny.curbed.com/2014/7/24/10069912/brooklyns-evolution-from-small-town-to-big-city-to-borough>.
- [Uncovering New York City: Weeksville, Brooklyn | Secrets of the Dead | PBS](#)



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LESSON 2: PRESENT

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Participants will be able to examine the current Weeksville Heritage Center site and discuss the site's current impact on the local community, as well as identify how the current mission of the organization is continuing the legacy of Weeksville's founding.

MATERIALS/SPACE:

- Plain White Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Access to the Internet

ALIGNING STANDARDS:

Next Generation Standards

RH2 (6-8)

RH7 (6-8)



Everyplace has a Weeksville where ordinary people came first and labored to create a more hospitable living setting for their loved ones. The rediscovery and preservation of this local history provides a means of reestablishing a continuity with the past so that children armed with the knowledge of the contributions of their forbears can gain strength to meet the challenge of the future.

-Joan Maynard, Founding Executive Director of Weeksville Heritage Center

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is the current mission of Weeksville Heritage Center?
- What programming and events have been done recently at the Center and how do they relate to the founding vision of the community as a space for Black people to safely grow and flourish?
- How did the Weeksville Heritage Center come to be?

LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

EXPLORE: The five w's of Weeksville: who, what, when, where, why. Using the handout, head over to Weeksville Heritage Center (check the website for current open times and days) or if you are not able to visit in person, visit their website: <https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/>. We highly recommend reviewing the Weeksville Heritage Center pre-visit booklet as it is chock full of primary source information and things to know before you visit the space either in-person or virtually: [Weeksville Pre-Visit Packet](#)



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LESSON 2:

PRESENT

LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

IN-PERSON EXPLORATION: It is incredibly important to visit Weeksville and attend one of their house tours. Each house has its own story and you should bring your handout (or pick one up onsite!) to make notes of what you learn from the tour. Once you finish the tour, join us for the next portion online.

VIRTUAL EXPLORATION: If you are unable to attend an in-person tour of the Hunterfly houses, the next best thing is this incredible video from [Vice TV of Messiah Rhodes' experience exploring the Weeksville Heritage Center](#).

MAP IT:

Before you wrap up with this lesson, take a moment to return to your map and see if you can draw where the Weeksville Heritage Center is located. What do you notice about the community's size versus the heritage center's land? What is missing?

“If you want to identify what a human community needs to be – anywhere in our world – Weeksville would be an excellent model.”

— Marcia Goldman, Former President
Weeksville Board of Trustees



FURTHER WONDERINGS:

If interested in diving deeper into the origins of Weeksville and Brooklyn, consider exploring the following questions:

- What is the significance of the Freedman's Torchlight?
- What is the importance of the establishment of the grid system in Brooklyn to Weeksville?
- Why would the founders of Weeksville prioritize education?
- What role did women play in Weeksville?
- What historic moments have a Weeksville connection in the 19th and 20th centuries?



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LESSON 2 RESOURCES

- “Collections & Research.” n.d. Weeksville. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/learn/collections-research/>.
- “Black to School: The History of Colored School No.1.” 2020. Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership. September 24, 2020. <https://myrtleavenue.org/colored-school-no-1-by-carl-hancock-rux/>.
- Walker, G.E. 1993. The Afro-American in New York City, 1827-1860. Routledge.
- “The History of Weeksville: When Crown Heights Had the Second-Largest Free Black Community in the U.S.” n.d. 6sqft. <https://www.6sqft.com/the-history-of-weeksville-when-crown-heights-had-the-second-largest-free-black-community-in-the-u-s/>.



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LESSON 3: FUTURE

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Participants will be able to think critically about the role that Weeksville Heritage Center currently plays in its community, and discuss and form opinions on ways the Heritage Center could expand on its current work further to interpret the importance and impact of this historic site.

MATERIALS/SPACE:

- Plain White Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Access to the Internet

ALIGNING STANDARDS:

Next Generation Standards

R6 (6-8)

RH6 (6-8)

W4 (6-8)



“It is an intentional free Black community that is self-determined. It intentionally has its own schools, newspapers, churches, and businesses,”



-Prithi Kanakamedala, Historian & CUNY professor

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- As the city changes due to technological advances, shifts in population, and external forces like gentrification, what does it mean to preserve spaces like Weeksville?
- How can we envision a future for a historically Black site like Weeksville as NYC continues to evolve?

LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

DISCUSS: Now that we have explored Weeksville’s past and present, let’s wonder about the future. How could we as a community preserve the stories of Weeksville and other free Black communities in New York City’s history?

READ: the W.E.B Du Bois short science fiction, AD 2150
What have you learned about this futuristic NYC? What has already happened? What hasn’t happened yet?

WRITE: Chart out your own thoughts about the future. What technologies do you think will be available in 2150? What do you think will still be around? What do you think will happen?



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LESSON 3: FUTURE

LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

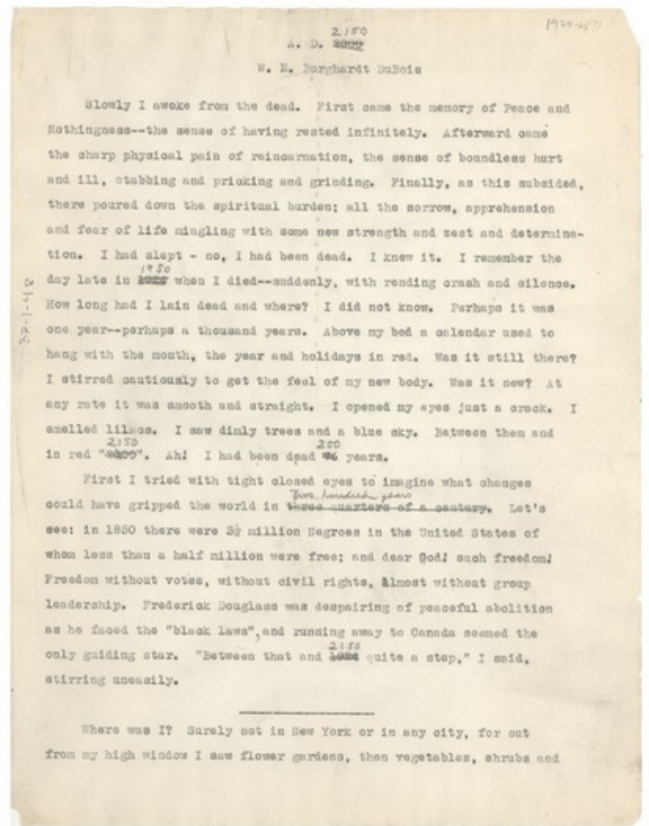
CREATE: Start drafting a travel poster or some other form of advertising for a futuristic Weeksville in the world that W.E.B Du Bois has created in his story. Using your notes from the reading and your own thoughts about the future, what images or text would you add to your futuristic advertisement for Weeksville? What images are you incorporating? What is being highlighted? Create your poster or other form of advertisement using the materials that excite you most or that you have on hand. Share your posters with us via Instagram or email. We might post them (with your permission of course!)



Photo: Cornelius Matton

“*The historic site is a sight of memory, memory helps build identity, identity builds community. Community and institution building is really a form of resistance... Weeksville is a story of self-sufficiency, and self-determination, and entrepreneurship*”

-Rob Fields, Former Executive Director of Weeksville



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LESSON 3 RESOURCES

- Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963. A. D. 2150, 1950. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Aligning Standards:

	Past Unit	Present Unit	Future Unit
Next Generation Standards that Curriculum Currently Meets	<p>READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6-8</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p> <p>RH2 (6-8): Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>RH7 (6-8): Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts</p>	<p>READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6-8</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p> <p>RH2 (6-8): Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>RH7 (6-8): Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts</p>	<p>WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS 6-8:</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</p> <p>W4 (6-8):: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.</p> <p>READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6-8</p> <p>Craft and Structure</p> <p>R6 (6-8): In literary texts, identify the point of view and explain how it is developed and conveys meaning. In informational texts, explain how an author's geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.</p> <p>RH6 (6-8): Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view, stance, or purpose (e.g. rhetorical language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts, images, visuals, etc.)</p>

CLICK THE LINK FOR: [Additional support around the standards for lesson expansion](#)



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

VOCABULARY GUIDE

Abolished- *to end an activity or custom officially*

Enclave- *a part of a country that is surrounded by another country, or a group of people who are different from the people living in the surrounding area*

Epidemic- *the appearance of a particular disease in a large number of people at the same time*

Gentrification- *the process by which a place, especially part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live*

Innovation- *a new idea or method*

Preservation- *the act of keeping something the same or of preventing it from being damaged*

Rebellion- *violent action organized by a group of people who are trying to change the political system in their country. Alternate Definition: action against those in authority, against the rules, or against normal and accepted ways of behaving.*

Self-sufficiency- *the quality or state of being able to provide everything you need, especially food, without the help of other people or countries. Alternate Definition: the quality of being able to take care of yourself, to be happy, or to deal with problems without help from other people.*

Definitions derived from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/>



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