



Biddy Mason

Teacher Guide

Former Slave, Pioneer, Real Estate Mogul, Philanthropist

Overview: Biddy Mason was born into slavery, survived a treacherous frontier crossing with a group of pioneers, and secured her freedom in the free state of California, where she became one of the wealthiest African-American women in the nation. Through careful saving and investments, Biddy Mason built an extensive commercial real-estate enterprise in what is now downtown Los Angeles. Her philanthropic efforts helped create and sustain African-American institutions in the city and shaped the city's overall civic life for future generations. Her life exemplified forbearance and endurance, genius, generosity and compassion, and a refusal to give into bitterness or resentment.

This lesson is appropriate for historical lessons about the 19th century, slavery, the Civil War, Women's History Month, or Black History Month. This lesson also emphasizes Social and Emotional SEL learning competencies, and highlights resilience, grit, determination, self-reliance, and other positive inner resources and character traits. See accompanying list of learning standards.

Lesson Prompt: Have you ever wondered what happened to people who were born in slavery but were later freed? Here's one story about an African-American woman who found great success on the West Coast.

Have students read the summary of Biddy Mason's life or watch the PowerPoint slide deck about her. There are also videos students can watch about her life.

There are accompanying assignments and also multiple-choice questions that can be included on upcoming quizzes or tests. Have students review the Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions. (You may wish to preview and select from these.)

Vocabulary

Students can look up and define the following vocabulary words:

Profit	Appreciate/Depreciate
Philanthropy	Investment
Interest/compound interest	Down payment
Legacy	Assets