

Paul Cuffe

Daring Seafarer and Early Abolitionist

Overview:

Paul Cuffe (1759-1817) was a mixed-race man from New England who outwitted pirates, suffered imprisonment, and fought for equal rights. These dramatic events contrast Cuffe's life as a family man, a humanitarian, and a supporter of African colonization during the early years of the American Republic. This lesson highlights Cuffe's courage, entrepreneurship and moral clarity through his devotion to abolishing slavery, pan-African efforts and commitment to just and equal treatment of all people. The lesson also teaches the importance of quality relationships between people of different races, dedication to personal and community improvement, and reveals the varied experiences of persons of color during and after America's Founding.

Lesson Objective:

In this lesson, students will learn about:

- the early life of Paul Cuffe
- early America's dependency on seafaring life
- how innovation and skill help in entrepreneurship
- how the Cuffe clan became affluent because of their family-focused business model
- the challenges that Cuffe and his family overcame
- the development of Sierra Leone and Liberia; "Back to Africa" movement
- how excellence and skill build a person's reputation
- virtues that Cuffe developed to be held in high esteem

Lesson Prompt:

What would cause a 14-year-old to sign up to voyage to the West Indians on a whaling ship? What difficulties would a young man who was half African and half Indian face in 1773? Are you learning a skill that you could someday use to begin your own business?

Share the Powerpoint slide show and have students consider and discuss the questions contained in the slides to spark discussion. The slideshow features content related to the lesson objectives, and is supplemented by the Activity Pack, which includes activities for independent classwork (see below). Critical Thinking Exercises can also be used to spur group SEL discussions.

Select activities from the accompanying Activity Pack according to your time allowance and student appropriateness. Use recommended resources to enhance lesson comprehension.

Activity Pack

Activities and Assignments (grades K-8)

Multiple Choice Questions (grades 4-8)

Critical Thinking Exercises (grades K-5 with guidance; 6-8 unassisted)

Map Activity

Crossword Puzzle (grades K-3)

Woodson Principles (Teacher support document)

Short, school-appropriate video selections and additional reading are also suggested.

Vocabulary:

Abolition, Abundant, Advocate, Align, Anglicized, Brig, Colonization, Diaspora, Entrepreneur, Mariner, Philanthropist, Prejudice, Repatriate, Scrounging

Recommended Resources:

WEBSITES

[Paul Cuffe Heritage Trail](#)

[National Archives \(Correspondence with James Madison\)](#)

[Paul Cuffe Personal and Family Papers \(Westport Historical Society\)](#)

ARTICLES

["Will the real Paul Cuffe please stand up?"](#)

[*Memoir of Captain Paul Cuffee, A Man of Colour*](#)

["Who Led the first Back-to-Africa Movement?" \(Henry Louis Gates, Jr.\)](#)

VIDEOS

[Captain Paul Cuffe's Legacy Lives On](#), (2 minutes, 38 seconds)

[Paul Cuffe - Following His Footsteps: New Revelations from Old Deeds](#), (42 minutes, 33 seconds)

[Captain Paul Cuffe](#), (27 minutes, 31 seconds)

[New Insights into the Life of Paul Cuffe](#), (51 minutes, 15 seconds)

[Happy Birthday, Paul Cuffe](#), (31 minutes, 12 seconds)

Standards and Learning Objectives

Mapped to the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies

K-2

Civics

D2.Civ.8.K-2. Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.

D2.Civ.9.K-2. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions while responding attentively to others when addressing ideas and making decisions as a group.

D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.

Economics

D2.Eco.1.K-2. Explain how scarcity necessitates decision making.

D2.Eco.2.K-2. Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.

D2.Eco.3.K-2. Describe the skills and knowledge required to produce certain goods and services.

Geography

D2.Geo.2.K-2. Use maps, graphs, photographs, and other representations to describe places and the relationships and interactions that shape them.

D2.Geo.7.K-2. Explain why and how people, goods, and ideas move from place to place.

D2.Geo.8.K-2. Compare how people in different types of communities use local and distant environments to meet their daily needs.

D2.Geo.9.K-2. Describe the connections between the physical environment of a place and the economic activities found there.

History

D2.His.1.K-2. Create a chronological sequence of multiple events.

D2.His.2.K-2. Compare life in the past to life today.

D2.His.3.K-2. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.

D2.His.4.K-2. Compare perspectives of people in the past to those of people in the present.

D2.His.12.K-2. Generate questions about a particular historical source as it relates to a particular historical event or development.

D2.His.14.K-2. Generate possible reasons for an event or development in the past.

D2.His.16.K-2. Select which reasons might be more likely than others to explain a historical event or development.

ELA

D4.1.K-2. Construct an argument with reasons.

D4.2.K-2. Construct explanations using correct sequence and relevant information.

D4.4.K-2. Ask and answer questions about arguments.

D4.5.K-2. Ask and answer questions about explanations.

Grades 3-5

Civics

D2.Civ.4.3-5. Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms. **D2.Civ.6.3-5.** Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

D2.Civ.8.3-5. Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.

D2.Civ.10.3-5. Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues.

D2.Civ.11.3-5. Compare procedures for making decisions in a variety of settings, including classroom, school, government, and/or society.

D2.Civ.12.3-5. Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.

D2.Civ.13.3-5. Explain how policies are developed to address public problems.

D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

Economics

D2.Eco.1.3-5. Compare the benefits and costs of individual choices.

D2.Eco.2.3-5. Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.

Geography

D2.Geo.1.3-5. Construct maps and other graphic representations of both familiar and unfamiliar places.

D2.Geo.2.3-5. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their environmental characteristics.

D2.Geo.7.3-5. Explain how cultural and environmental characteristics affect the distribution and movement of people, goods, and ideas.

History

D2.His.1.3-5. Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

D2.His.2.3-5. Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

D2.His.4.3-5. Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

D2.His.5.3-5. Explain connections among historical contexts and people's perspectives at the time.

D2.His.6.3-5. Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.

D2.His.11.3-5. Infer the intended audience and purpose of a historical source from information within the source itself.

D2.His.14.3-5. Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

ELA

D4.1.3-5. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

D4.2.3-5. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

D4.4.3-5. Critique arguments.

D4.5.3-5. Critique explanations.

D4.6.3-5. Draw on disciplinary concepts to explain the challenges people have faced and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.

Grades 6-8

Civics

D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

Economics

D2.Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

History

D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

D2.His.11.6-8. Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, date, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not easily identified.

D2.His.12.6-8. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

D2.His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

ELA

D4.1.6-8. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

D4.2.6-8. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

D4.4.6-8. Critique arguments for credibility.

D4.5.6-8. Critique the structure of explanations.