

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Enslavement in the New World

Grades 3-5

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints presents the history of Brazil's Northeast, including its history of sugar plantations and the enslavement of Africans who were forced to labor in the fields and build the colonial cities. Because the history of slavery throughout the Americas is a difficult and unsettling issue for many people, including young children, this information sheet is designed to help teachers think about this subject and how it might be introduced to young children.

The following five concepts should be discussed with your students before visiting the exhibition, *Bandits & Heroes Poets & Saints* at the Charles Wright Museum of African American History.

- Slavery occurs when one person legally has power over the life and labor of another. Enslaving others is almost as old as human civilization. Many ancient cultures such as Greece, Rome, Egypt, and China participated in different forms of enslavement, and the enslaved were often prisoners of war, or criminals being punished for a crime.
- From 1500 to 1870, the Portuguese forced five million enslaved Africans to Brazil, and a half million to the United States during the Atlantic slave trade. Africans were treated like chattel or property; they worked extremely long hours and were given meager food, clothing and housing.
- The plantation owner had the right to buy and sell family members. He could punish disobedient or rebellious behavior by whipping, shackling, hanging, branding, or beating them. Sexual exploitation of enslaved women was common; many fought back and many died resisting. Fearful that they would plan escapes and rebellions, slaveholders would not generally allow the enslaved to learn to read and write.

- Enslavement continued to be the backbone of colonial Brazilian economy. By 1600, Brazil became the largest sugar exporter in the world with over 3000 sugar plantations or *engenhos* (en-JEN-yoos) across Brazil. Crude *senzalas* (sen-ZA-lahs) or houses for the enslaved formed complexes similar to the cotton plantations of the southern United States; however, the conditions on the plantations in both countries was miserable and inhumane.
- Some enslaved people obtained their freedom and were instrumental in connecting with such groups as free Africans, Europeans, Quakers, Protestant and Catholic clergy to assist others to gain their freedom. Enslavement was abolished in the United States in 1865 and in Brazil in 1888.

Some Pre-visit Activities for Students:

- Read the three short excerpts from “Retentions: Our African Past Student Information Sheet” that includes writings by Olaudah Equiano, R.H. Stone and Antonio de Castro Alves. Answer questions for each excerpt.
- Have students go to the YouTube video, *The Underground Railroad: Escape from Slavery*. This 14-slide audio presentation provides an overview of enslavement in America. There is also a teacher’s guide, websites for further study, activities, and a bibliography on this site. List three important ideas from the slide presentation.

For Teachers:

- Read the Teacher Information Sheets on African Retentions in the Americas to review some of the retained elements or practices from African culture that are present today in Brazil and North America.
- **View the YouTube video:** *Tough To Teach: Slavery in America*, a 4th grade teacher demonstrates a unique approach to a lesson on Harriet Tubman.