

William Wilberforce | Lesson Plan

How was William Wilberforce instrumental in ending the Atlantic Slave Trade?

Students will understand that Great Britain and the United States were two of the first nations to end slavery. They will recognize that, as William Wilberforce exemplified, compassion, courage, and Biblical values are the best ways to fight injustice.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the horrors of slavery and the necessity of its abolition.
- Identify William Wilberforce and explain his role in ending the Atlantic Slave Trade.
- Investigate the value of acting on convictions with humility and perseverance.
- Defend the concept that all people are created in the image of God and, therefore, equally worthy of respect.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Parliament:** The lawmaking body in the government of the United Kingdom (Great Britain).
- **Poverty:** A lack of food, clothing, and shelter.
- **The Middle Passage:** The long journey of enslaved Africans from Africa to the Americas.
- **Atlantic Slave Trade:** The selling of African people as slaves in and around the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Pamphlet:** A short printed publication with no cover or with a paper cover written to share information.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.W.2

Academic Subject Areas: Biography, Racism, Judeo-Christian Values

What You'll Need

- Video: *William Wilberforce: Ending the Slave Trade* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *William Wilberforce: Ending the Slave Trade* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Arrange students in a circle and invite them to share a time when they felt something was unfair.
2. Transition the conversation to include injustices within the world at large (e.g., prejudice, poverty, and hunger).
3. Ask students how long they think they would be willing to work toward ending an injustice they see in the world.



4. Explain that William Wilberforce was a man who persevered for 18 years in the British Parliament to end slavery in his country.
5. Reveal that for hundreds of years, millions of Africans were sold and brought to the New World as a part of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Invite students to picture the following scenario:
 - *Imagine living happily with your family in Africa. One day, you are taken from them and put on a ship for a long, exhausting journey across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. Many people around you are sick and dying: some starve, some die of thirst, and some get sick and die from diseases. If you happen to survive the miserable journey, you don't have much to look forward to—your life will likely be one of hard labor, working day after day harvesting crops in scorching weather.*
6. Disclose that slavery is an evil institution, but sadly has existed throughout history. The above scenario describes what it was like for millions of Africans over hundreds of years. But many upstanding, compassionate people like William Wilberforce worked hard to put an end to the Atlantic Slave Trade, and their perseverance ultimately led to the end of slavery in the West.
7. Display the worksheet and distribute individual copies to students.
8. Read over the worksheet as a class so that students know what to listen for during the video.

Watch and Complete: (15 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Pause throughout the video to allow students to complete answers and notes on the worksheet. Assist as needed.

Wrap-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Allow students several minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. If time allows, invite volunteers to share their responses to Question 9.
3. Collect the worksheet as a formative assessment or participation grade.
4. As a culminating activity, pose the following questions for classroom discussion:
 - How was William Wilberforce instrumental in ending the Atlantic Slave Trade?
 - Why do you think it was so vital to end slavery?
 - What are some specific ways you can demonstrate, in your daily life, that you believe all people are created in the image of God and deserve equal respect?
5. Clarify the concept that slavery was a horrific injustice, an evil institution that was “a stain on the conscience” of every country that ever participated in it. However, many good people like William Wilberforce recognized the immorality of slavery and worked hard and persevered to help end it.
6. Encourage students to reflect on the purpose and importance of investigating the life of William Wilberforce. His courage, compassion, and humble perseverance demonstrate the importance of acting on conviction, even amid adversity. Learning about his life

inspires us to fight injustice and bring positive change to our community, country, and world.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.