**Slave Trade Simulation**

Materials:

* Tape (masking tape, duct tape, or painter’s tape)
* Note cards
* Tape measure
* String
* Confetti (shredded paper)
* Bricks (or any other heavy objects: text books, gallons of water, etc.)
* Dot stickers (not sure what the technical term is)
* Water Gun
* Projector
* Speakers

1. For this activity you will first need to clear out the center of your room. Once cleared, tape off a section in the relative shape of a ship. You want it to be big enough for all of your students to fit in, but not so big that they can sit comfortably.
2. Tape off two separate boxes on each side of the “ship” these will serve as a spot for diseased slaves who were weighted down and thrown overboard alive and as a ‘dead’ zone for those who died along the journey
3. Give each student 4 note cards on each card have the students write things that they would like to keep/take with them on a trip to a new land that they will not return home from. Things they could include may be material items such as their cell phones or x-box, or non-material items such as their family, friends, health, etc.
4. Have the students sit in the “ship” with their 4 notecards.
5. Once seated, measure up about 4 feet and run a few pieces of string over the students head. This will help demonstrate the limited space aboard the slave ships.
6. (this is optional) We are starting with “The Lonesome Valley” by the Fairfield Four (you might remember it from O Brother Where Art Thou?) to set the mood and get the students ready and settled down (remember these are middle schoolers in close quarters with each other). Here is a link to a version on Youtube that is pretty image neutral. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WHdKSfbZs>
7. After the intro (if you chose to do it) then play “The Middle Passage” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xycn9N_qG-Q>
8. We plan on showing this twice. The first time with no interruptions to allow it to sink in and the second time to draw attention to what is going on in the pictures with guided questions such as what color are the slave catchers? The goal here is to have students come to the conclusion that it was other African’s who supplied the slave trade. That the African slave trade was enacted for economic reasons not out of racist ideals. That Slavery created racism; racism didn’t create slavery.
9. While the simulation is going on go around and take some of the notecards from students ripping them up violently.
10. Next ask questions such as “where do you go to the bathroom”? And “What happens if you get sick and have to throw up, where do you do it”? Tell the students that so and so got sick and then throw some confetti on the students near them.
11. Next place some of the dot stickers on other students. Inform the students that those with stickers are sick with diseases. Ask “What should we do”? Then have the diseased students get up and hold a brick (or heavy object of your choosing) standing in one of the squares off to the side. This is to simulate that infected slaves would be thrown overboard alive with weights tied to them to float them to the bottom.
12. Some students will also have to simulate those who died from the conditions aboard the slave ship. Have a few students sit (still in close quarters) in the other square to simulate those who died. You will need to select 20% of your students to fill in the ‘dead’ zone as this was the average percentage of losses during the beginning stages of the trade. Later on those numbers were reduced to 8 to 10%, but I think it would be beneficial for students to visualize it at its worst.
13. Finally end the simulation and ask who still has notecards left. Make sure you take those from them and rip them up.
14. Have the students go back to their seats for discussion. Ask them how they felt. Do they feel ready to start their new lives?
15. Have them leave with an exit ticket that explains one thing that stood out to them from the simulation and what the conditions were like aboard a slave ship.

To simulate slave revolt/ deterrents of revolts, or reasons for a lack of revolt you may choose to place a water gun on a desk close to the “ship”. Tell students that if they get to the gun and squirt you (if you are comfortable with this) without you seeing them then they will be “free”. However, if they are caught then their family cards (if they have them left) will be destroyed and they will be placed into the ‘dead zone’ and will have to write a short essay explaining the reasons why slave might not have revolted.

Students should be in close quarters on the “ship” for as long as possible. This should not be comfortable for them, but rather provide them with a firsthand glimpse into the conditions endured aboard a slave ship. The longer you can keep them aboard, the more effective it should be.